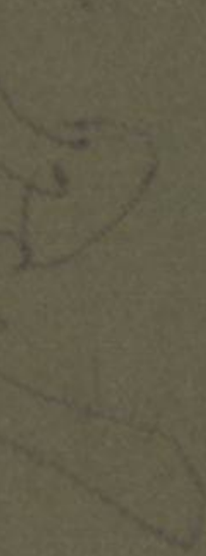
THE WORKS OF ROBERT BROWNING



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ROBERT BROWNING'S WORKS

CENTENARY EDITION

IN TEN VOLUMES

VOLUME X

THE WORKS OF

WITH INTRODUCTIONS BY

SIR F. G. KENYON, K.C.B., D.LITT.

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VOLUME X—JOCOSERIA—FERISHTAH'S FANCIES—PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE OF IMPORTANCE IN THEIR DAY—ASOLANDO

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INTRODUCTION

JOCOSERIA

After the second series of *Dramatic Idyls*, an interval of three years elapsed before Browning issued another volume of verse; and when it appeared, it was only a small collection of ten poems, miscellaneous in character, and not claiming any unity either in form or in thought. "It is a collection of things grav*ish* and gay*ish*—hence the title *Jocoseria*—which is Batavian Latin, I think," said Browning in a letter to Dr. Furnivall on January 9, 1883 (Wise, *Letters of R. Browning*, ii. 12). The volume, which had gone to the printers that day, is there described as containing "eleven pieces in all"; but there is no evidence to show whether this was merely an oversight, or whether one poem was subsequently withdrawn, or whether, as is possible, the sonnets at the end of *Jochanan Hakkadosh* were reckoned separately. The title was a reminiscence of a book with which Browning had been acquainted in early years; for in his note at the end of *Paracelsus* (see vol. ii. p. 169) he refers to "such rubbish as Melander's 'Jocoseria,'"—a collection of jests and anecdotes published in 1597.

Jocoseria was not unsuccessful, since it was reprinted twice; but it does not rank with its author's more important works. It contains two

charming little lyrics in *Wanting is—What?* and *Never the Time and the Place*, and six anecdotes in verse, of which *Mary Wollstonecraft and Fuseli* is the most dramatic; but all these are somewhat slight in texture. *Ixion*, with its vigorous statement of one of the eternal problems of man's relations to God, is the most important poem in the volume: for *Jochanan Hakkadosh*, though considerably the longest, is perhaps the least satisfactory of all.

Donald

With reference to this poem, Browning, in a letter written shortly after its composition, describes what he calls "an old peculiarity in my mental digestion—a long and obscure process. There comes up unexpectedly some subject for poetry, which has been dormant, and apparently dead, for perhaps dozens of years. A month since I wrote a poem of some two hundred lines about a story I heard more than forty years ago, and never dreamed of trying to repeat, wondering how it had so long escaped me; and so it has been with my best things" (Mrs. Bronson, *Cornhill Magazine*, February 1902, p. 9). According to Mrs. Orr (*Handbook*, p. 322) the story was told to Browning by one who had heard it from its hero, the so-called Donald, himself; but it is also told by Sir Walter Scott (in *The Keepsake* for 1832), as having been heard by himself in early youth from the actor and sufferer, whom he calls Duncan, about twenty years after the event (see

Nicoll and Wise, *Literary Anecdotes of the Nineteenth Century*, i. 466). Scott's judgment on the story is much the same as Browning's: "I never could approve of Duncan's conduct towards the deer in a moral point of view."

Solomon and Balkis

As has been observed already (vol. iv, p. xxx) Browning had a liking for Jewish literature and tradition, and this volume contains more than one example of it. Balkis is the traditional name assigned to the Queen of Sheba, around whose visit to Solomon a whole body of legends grew up.

Cristina and Monaldeschi

This is a historical event, which took place on November 10, 1657. Cristina, daughter and successor of Gustavus Adolphus, having abdicated the crown of Sweden in 1654, and having since then visited various parts of Europe, was at that date at Fontainebleau, awaiting an invitation from Louis XIV to proceed to Paris. The Marquis Gian Rinaldi Monaldeschi was her Grand Equerry and confidant,—some said, her lover. Certainly he had been trusted by her with some intimate secrets, whether of love or policy; and in October Cristina had reason to believe that he had betrayed her confidence. The Queen's vengeance was inflicted as described in the poem. She had summoned the Prior of the Maturins to be present; and in the Galerie des Cerfs she

confronted the unhappy Monaldeschi with the proofs of his perfidy, and handed him over to her guards to kill, after the Prior had shrived him. Browning represents his death as taking place immediately and in her presence; but in fact she had withdrawn, and had rejected repeated entreaties by the priest and the officer commanding the guard that he might be spared, before the murder was actually consummated.

Mary Wollstonecraft and Fuseli

This poem is based upon an episode (or supposed episode, for its reality has been disputed) in the life of the brilliant and attractive, but unhappy, Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797). The child of a drunken father, and brought up in a wretched home, her talents brought her into some note in literary society. Among her acquaintances was the artist Fuseli, and according to Fuseli's biographer she became devotedly attached to him, in spite of the fact that he was already married. She was a follower of Rousseau, and her views on marriage, which were of a very advanced character, led her into temporary connexions, first with one Gilbert Imlay, and then with William Godwin, whom she married in 1797. Her daughter Mary (whose birth she did not long survive) is well known as the wife of Shelley.

Adam, Lilith, and Eve

A trivial fancy, in which the names have no significance beyond that of generalizing the appli-

cation of the story by giving the parties the names of the first man and the first women,— Lilith being, according to the Hebrew legend, the first wife of Adam, who left him and became a demon. In Jewish folk-lore, Lilith is a night-monster or vampire.

Ixion

The well-known classical legend of Ixion,— who, having presumed to make love to Hera, the wife of Zeus, was punished by being bound to a wheel which revolved for ever in Tartarus—is made by Browning the vehicle of a denunciation of the belief in an endless vindictive punishment for errors due to the frailty of man's nature, for which he is not responsible,—a frailty which needs loving sympathy and guidance, not everlasting torture. The metre is classical also, being the elegiac couplet, though with a rough rhythm which is Browning's own. This poem alone suffices, with one or two of the lyrics, to redeem the *Jocoseria* volume from insignificance in the record of Browning's work.

Jochanan Hakkadosh

The appearance of Rabbinical legend in this poem is fictitious, though portions of Rabbinical learning are embedded in it. "The whole story is a fiction of my own," said Browning himself, "with just this foundation, that the old Rabbis fancied that *earnest wishing* might add to a valued life" (Wise, *Letters of R. Browning*, ii. 16).

INTRODUCTION

The Hebrew phrases in the note at the end of the poem are a part of the mystification, the title of the supposed treatise "existing dispersedly in fragments of Rabbinical writing," being "A collection of many lies," while the "pithy proverb" is the well-known Jewish saying, "From Moses to Moses [*sc.* Moses Maimonides] arose none like Moses."

Never the Time and the Place

A charming lyric, which for its freshness and passion might have been written thirty or forty years earlier. In this volume it makes a pair with the introductory "Wanting is—What?"

Pambo

In this final poem Browning once more has recourse to a reminiscence of his early youth; for the story of Pambo is derived from that *Wonders of the Little World* of Nathaniel Wanley, to which he was also indebted for *The Pied Piper*, *The Cardinal and the Dog*, and for details in others of his poems. An earlier authority for it is Socrates' *Ecclesiastical History*, iv. 23. In the last stanza Browning has one more fling at his critics, but in a much less exacerbated mood than in *Pacchiarotto*.

FERISHTAH'S FANCIES

Of *Ferishtah's Fancies* very little need be said. It is a group of poems, dealing directly, like *La Saisiaz* and *Christmas Eve and Easter Day*,

with some of the greatest problems of philosophy and religion. For the study of Browning's personal beliefs, it is of great importance; for there is no attempt made to disguise the fact that the opinions of Ferishtah are Browning's own. For once the form of the dramatic monologue has no dramatic significance. The local colouring is of the slightest. "Do not suppose," wrote Browning just before the publication of the volume, "there is more than a thin disguise of a few Persian names and allusions. There was no such person as Ferishtah, and the stories are all inventions. The Hebrew quotations are put in for a purpose, as a direct acknowledgment that certain doctrines may be found in the Old Book which the Concocters of Novel Schemes of Morality put forth as discoveries of their own" (Nicoll and Wise, *Literary Anecdotes of the Nineteenth Century*, i. 471). The form actually adopted is due to one of those reminiscences of his early reading which Browning states to have been common with him (see above, p. vi). The poem began with a versification of a fable by Pilpay, which Browning had read as a boy; and it grew into an exposition of the poet's own belief on some of the profoundest problems of life. Philosophical poems can seldom have a lasting life, since each generation requires to have these perennial problems stated in its own way; but for his own generation Browning's statement was helpful and important, while the poetic value of the volume is enhanced by the characteristic and

often charming lyrics interspersed between its several parts.

The Prologue and Epilogue of *Ferishtah's Fancies* were written during Browning's autumn holiday in 1883, the former in September at Gressoney St. Jean, in the Val d'Aosta, the latter in December, while the guest of Mrs. Bronson in Venice. The other poems must have been written in 1883 and 1884, and the volume was published in November of the latter year. It passed into a second edition within two months, while a third followed later, but without alterations.

PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

In the interval between the publication of *Ferishtah's Fancies* and his next volume, Browning lost the nearest and dearest of his male friends, Joseph Milsand. Their acquaintanceship began in Paris, in 1852 (*Letters of E. B. Browning*, ii. 29, 43), and speedily became a warm friendship. In 1863 the reprint of *Sordello* (in the three-volume collected *Poems*) was dedicated to him. In the summers of 1870, 1872 and 1873, they were neighbours at St. Aubin, and it was Milsand who first furnished Browning with the outline of the local tragedy embodied in *Red Cotton Night-Cap Country* (see vol. vii. p. xiv). Milsand died in September, 1886, and to him (with a curious misprint in the date, MDLXXXVI) Browning dedicated his next volume, published early in the following year.

INTRODUCTION

This volume was *Parleyings with Certain Peopl. of Importance in their Day*. The seven persons thus distinguished, Bernard de Mandeville, Daniel Bartoli, Christopher Smart, George Bubb Dodington, Francis Furini, Gerard de Lairesse, and Charles Avison, include three writers, a politician, two artists, and a musician. They are not, however, a merely fortuitous collection. They are the result of that trick, described by Browning above (p. vi), of mental recurrence to the memories of boyhood ; for all were associated with his early intellectual development. Their works were in his father's library, or they were otherwise associated with his first experiences in art and music (see especially Hall Griffin and Minchin, *Life*, pp. 6–20). Now, at the close of his life, he reverted to these old acquaintances, and drew from them the materials for the last but one in his long list of volumes.

In form these poems show a remarkable departure from Browning's usual practice ; for, whereas his special taste was for the dramatic monologue, a form of art which he certainly developed to a height previously unreached, in this volume he turns round and speaks to his characters, instead of making them speak for themselves. The metre (except in the prologue and epilogue, and in a few interspersed passages) is a free handling of rhymed decasyllabic verse, the lines not always rhyming in couplets, though that is the predominant combination.

Though the volume as a whole shows some of

the inevitable decline in poetic power and inspiration, the mind and fancy are as active as ever; while in addition the biographical interest gives it an important position in the record of Browning's mental life.

Apollo and the Fates

This somewhat burlesque poem is based on the story to which Æschylus refers in the lines noted by Browning at the beginning of the poem (*Eumenides*, ll. 723–4, 727–8, in the usual numbering):

> τοιαῦτ' ἔδρασας καὶ Φέρητος ἐν δόμοις·
> Μοίρας ἔπεισας ἀφθίτους θεῖναι βροτούς.
> . . . . . .
> σύ τοι παλαιὰς ὑπνομὰς καταφθίσας
> οἴνῳ παρηπάτησας ἀρχαίας θεάς.

"So didst thou [Apollo] also in the house of Pheres, when thou did'st persuade the Fates to make mortals undying. . . . Thou did'st bring to nought the dispensation of old time, deceiving with wine the ancient goddesses." The story is that on which the *Alcestis* of Euripides is founded (see above, *Balaustion's Adventure*, in vol. vii.). The passage from the Homeric *Hymn to Mercury* states that the Fates are three virgin sisters, who tell the truth when they are drunk on honey, but deceive when they are deprived of it:

> αἱ δ' ὅτε μὲν θυίωσιν ἐδηδυῖαι μέλι χλωρόν,
> προφρονέως ἐθέλουσιν ἀληθείην ἀγορεύειν·
> ἣν δ' ἀπονοσφισθῶσι θεῶν ἡδεῖαν ἐδωδήν,
> ψεύδονται δὴ ἔπειτα δι' ἀλλήλων δονέουσαι.

INTRODUCTION

The prologue has no definite connection with the poems to which it is prefixed; but this is common with Browning, though usually his prologues and epilogues are much slighter than in the present case.

Bernard de Mandeville

Bernard Mandeville, or de Mandeville, achieved a *succès de scandale* by the publication in 1714 of his philosophical treatise, *The Fable of the Bees, or Private Vices Public Benefits*, the main thesis of which was that virtue is not natural to man, but is the invention of astute men, who have persuaded mankind in general to prefer the public interest to their own. Self-love is the one natural passion: "the moral virtues are the political offspring which flattery begot upon pride." Honour is an invention of moralists or politicians. It is the evil qualities of men that lead to greatness, and so promote the public weal. Luxury is a vice, and without luxury we should have no trade. This cynical attack on human nature attracted much attention at the time, and was the subject of much controversy, in which Mandeville strenuously defended himself against the charge of immorality. Browning, who had given a copy of the book to his father in 1833, takes the side of Mandeville, and makes him his mouthpiece for an argument against

> "A mouth which yesterday
> Was magisterial in antithesis
> To half the truths we hold."

This "magisterial mouth," or "parlous friend," is obviously Carlyle, whom Browning always regarded with affectionate reverence, and who had died in 1881.

Daniel Bartoli

Daniel Bartoli was the author of a volume of *Simboli*, to which Browning was introduced by his Italian tutor, Angelo Cerutti, who published in 1830 an edition of the work for which Browning and his sister subscribed. Browning frequently carried the book with him, and it was on its fly-leaf that he originally wrote *How They brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix* (see vol. iii. p. xiii), and *Home Thoughts from the Sea*. Bartoli's only connection with the story contained in this poem is that he was much addicted to saint-worship; and Browning therefore summons him to worship the lady whose virtues he proceeds to record. The story is a true one, the lady being Marianne Pajet, and the Duke, Charles IV of Lorraine. Their intended marriage was frustrated, as described, by Louis XIV; and the "fervid youth" who conceived so deep an admiration of her when deserted by her faint-hearted spouse, and who ultimately married her, was the Marquis de Lessay. The story is told by Mrs. Orr in her *Handbook*.

Christopher Smart

The one title to fame of Christopher Smart (1722–1771), otherwise an indifferent poetaster,

is his *Song to David*, written in a madhouse and published in 1763. Both in thought and style it has a vigour, a freshness, and a dignity wholly unlike the conventional regularity which Smart, at ordinary times, shared with most of the minor poets of the eighteenth century. Browning made acquaintance with him early, in the first instance through the gift from his uncle Reuben of his translation of Horace; and he refers to him (without naming him) in *Paracelsus*, i. 770–774. In later life he was fond of quoting the *Song to David* (see Wise, *Letters of R. Browning*, ii. 69).

George Bubb Dodington

George Bubb (1691–1762), better known with the added surname of Dodington, which he assumed in 1720, than by the title of Lord Melcombe which he acquired in 1761, has come down to posterity with an unsavoury reputation as the type of the time-serving politician. His *Diary* (published in 1784) was in the library of Browning's father; and in this study Browning uses him as an example of the self-seeker who, being fool as well as knave, is not even successful in his self-seeking. Mrs. Orr (*Handbook*, p. 351) states that the higher and more successful style of political trickery, indicated in the poem in comparison with Dodington's, represents Browning's idea of Disraeli; but she does not give her authority for this belief.

INTRODUCTION

Francis Furini

Of Furini, unlike the other subjects of the *Parleyings*, there is no trace among the reminiscences of Browning's early life. Furini was a Florentine painter of the seventeenth century, of whom a notice is given in the comprehensive work of Filippo Baldinucci (see vol. ix. p. xiii); and besides being an artist he was also a conscientious priest. He was subjected to some blame for his realistic representations of the nude female figure; but he defended himself strenuously against any charge of immorality on that account. The subject was one on which Browning felt strongly. Some five-and-thirty years ago he had written in *Fra Lippo Lippi*, with reference to the painting of flesh:

> "If you get simple beauty and nought else
> You get about the best thing God invents" (IV. 110);

and his feelings had recently been stirred by some criticisms made upon a picture painted and exhibited by his son. He therefore takes Furini as his medium for a vindication, not of the permissibility merely, but of the true religiousness of a reverent portrayal of the beauty of the human form. His son's picture is the subject of the concluding lines.

Gerard de Lairesse

In this poem we are carried back to Browning's youth. Gerard de Lairesse was a Belgian painter (with a strong predilection for classical incident)

and a writer upon art in the latter half of the seventeenth century. His chief work was entitled *The Art of Painting in all its Branches*, first published in 1701. An English translation of it, published in 1738, was in the library of Browning's father, and on the fly-leaf of it Browning himself wrote in 1874: "I read this book more often and with greater delight when I was a child than any other: and still remember the main of it most gratefully for the good I seem to have got from the prints and wonderful text" (Hall Griffin and Minchin, *Life*, p. 9). Now, after a lapse of some sixty-five years, he paid his debt of gratitude in verse. One feature of the book was an imaginary walk in which the painter evokes a series of images and pictures from the objects seen as he passes; and Browning here matches this with the description of another walk (ll. 181–362), which is the most highly coloured passage in the whole of the *Parleyings*. The poem ends with the brilliant little song, "Dance, yellows and whites and reds," which had in 1886 been contributed (with the title, "A Spring Song") to *The New Amphion, being the Book of the Edinburgh University Union Fancy Fair*.

Charles Avison

In Browning's picture gallery, Charles Avison stands for music as Gerard de Lairesse for painting. He was organist at Newcastle from 1736 to 1770, when he died. He composed music, including the "Grand March in C Major,"

which was a delight of Browning's childish ear, and which forms the text of the present poem. He also published an *Essay on Musical Expression* (1752). The March itself is printed at the end of the poem, and a song of the period of England's struggle for parliamentary freedom is written to go to it.

Fust and his Friends

As the prologue to the *Parleyings* was a classical fantasia, so the epilogue is a mediæval fantasia; and neither has any connection with the main contents of the volume. Johann Fust is (with Gutenberg) the traditionally accepted inventor of printing from movable types in Europe, though in point of fact he was the capitalist of the invention rather than the craftsman; and in certain German legends he is identified with Dr. Faustus. Browning takes up the story in this form, and turns it into a meditation on the good and evil results which may be expected from his invention. The greater part of the poem is merely a rather grotesque play of fancy; but at the end it turns into serious and impassioned verse.

ASOLANDO

In his last volume, *Asolando*, Browning was like the good householder, who brings out of his treasure things new and old. Its contents range over a period of forty-seven years, from *The Cardinal and the Dog*, which was written in 1842, to

the *Prologue*, dated September 6, 1889, which, with other poems, was written during the last visit to Asolo. For the most part, however, there is no reason to doubt that they belong to the last two years of his life; and they show his poetic spirit running freshly and brightly to its close. During those two years, 1888 and 1889, the collected edition of his *Poetical Works* in sixteen volumes, subsequently completed by a seventeenth, was coming out, and part of his time was occupied with the work of revision connected with it. But he was also writing fresh verse. In August, 1889, he, with his sister, visited Asolo for the third and last time. There he corrected the proof sheets of his last volume; there he wrote certainly the *Prologue* and *The Lady and the Painter;* and from his visit there was derived the title of the book. At the beginning of November he moved on to his son's new house in Venice, the Palazzo Rezzonico or the Grand Canal, which will henceforth bear his memorial tablet as long as Italy retains her affection for the English poets who have loved her. Late in the month he caught a chill, which his general strength (in spite of his feeling of health) was in no state to resist; and there, on December 12, the end came. On that very day *Asolando* had been published in London, and the first reviews, based upon the advance copies supplied by the publishers, appeared that morning in the London papers. The news of the favourable reception which they gave to the volume

was telegraphed out to Venice, and the dying poet was just able to express his satisfaction.

Asolando was appropriately dedicated to Mrs. Arthur Bronson, the friend who had frequently been his hostess in Venice, and who had arranged all the details of his last visit to Asolo, where she had herself taken a house. Some of her recollections of Browning are recorded in the *Cornhill Magazine* for February, 1902.

The death of the poet no doubt co-operated with the attractiveness of the poetry (which is of a much simpler character than most of the *Parleyings*) to stimulate the demand for the volume, of which seven reprints were issued in the course of a few weeks, while an eighth and a ninth followed subsequently.

In the Introduction to vol. vii. of this edition (p. viii) it was stated that the original MS. of *Asolando* was retained by Mr. R. Barrett Browning for his life, when he presented the rest of his father's MSS. to Balliol College. It was Mr. R. B. Browning's intention that *Asolando* should follow the rest at his death; but since he omitted to embody his intentions in a will, the ultimate destination of the MS. is for the moment doubtful. Only, apparently, through private generosity could it reach the home designed for it by its author and his son.

Prologue

The prologue has a special interest as one of Browning's few direct utterances of a part of his

poetic creed, delivered at the very close of his poetic career. The date attached to it shows that it was written during the last visit to Asolo, within a few days after his arrival there.

Rosny

It is on record that *Rosny* was written at the beginning of 1888, and was followed by *Beatrice Signorini* and *Flute Music* (see L. Whiting, *The Brownings, their Life and Art*, p. 267).

Dubiety

Though record is wanting, one feels that the "autumn weather" here invoked is that of the last visit to Asolo. In this peaceful reverie, where all sense of conflict and effort is over, and only the memory of the love that gilded earlier days comes back, one would find the appropriate atmosphere for the close of a poet's life.

Now: Humility: Poetics: Summum Bonum: A Pearl, a Girl: Speculative: White Witchcraft

This group of love-poems makes a curious contrast with the reverie of age which precedes them. There is no direct evidence to prove their date, but in style they resemble the lyrics of the same class in *Jocoseria* and *Ferishtah*. If they had been in existence in 1883, they would probably have been included in the former of these volumes, the contents of which are rather meagre; hence, in spite of their extraordinary verve and vigour—

extraordinary in a poet of over seventy years—they probably belong to the last years of the poet's life.

Bad Dreams, I–IV

This series of conundrums shows Browning as the poet of puzzles to the last; and they form an amusing exercise to those who take pleasure in exercises of ingenuity.

Inapprehensiveness

A vivid little fancy, evidently of the Asolo period, from the allusion in line 12.

Which?

The first section of the volume closes with this anecdote, which might be associated with the group of love lyrics noticed above.

The Cardinal and the Dog

A group of stories follows; and the first of them, at least, belongs to a period very far removed from that of the majority of the contents of this volume. *The Cardinal and the Dog* was, in fact, a companion poem to *The Pied Piper*, having been written, like it, to amuse Willie Macready, the actor's son, during an illness. "He had a talent for drawing," wrote Browning to Dr. Furnivall in 1881 (Wise, *Letters of R. Browning*, i. 76), "and asked me to give him some little thing to illustrate; so I made a bit of a poem out of an old account of the death

of the Pope's Legate at the Council of Trent,—which he made such clever drawings for, that I tried at a more picturesque subject, the Piper." Browning derived the story (as he did, in part at least, that of *The Pied Piper*), from Wanley's *Wonders of the Little World.*

The Pope and the Net: The Bean-Feast

One is inclined to refer these poems to the same period as *The Cardinal and the Dog*; but direct evidence appears to be lacking.

Muckle-Mouth Meg

This anecdote is historical, and concerns the ancestors of no less a person than Sir Walter Scott. The story is thus told by Lockhart:

"Another striking chapter in the genealogical history belongs to the marriage of Auld Wat's son and heir, afterwards Sir William Scott of Harden, distinguished by the early favour of James VI, and severely fined for his loyalty under the usurpation of Cromwell. The period of this gentleman's youth was a very wild one in that district. The Border clans still made war on each other occasionally, much in the fashion of their forefathers; and the young and handsome heir of Harden, engaging in a foray upon the lands of Sir Gideon Murray of Elibank, treasurer-depute of Scotland, was overpowered by that baron's retainers, and carried in shackles to his castle, now a heap of ruins, on the banks of the Tweed. Elibank's 'doom-tree' extended its broad arms close to the gates of his fortress, and

the indignant laird was on the point of desiring his prisoner to say a last prayer, when his more considerate dame interposed milder counsels, suggesting that the culprit was born to a good estate, and that they had three unmarried daughters. Young Harden, not, it is said, without hesitation, agreed to save his life by taking the plainest of the three off their hands; and the contract of marriage, executed instantly on the parchment of a drum, is still in the charter-chest of his noble representative."

Arcades Ambo

This forms a companion poem to *Tray*, in the first series of *Dramatic Idyls* (vol. ix, p. xx) as the deliverance of Browning's soul against vivisection.

The Lady and the Painter

This is certainly one of Browning's last poems, having been written during the last visit to Asolo. The story of its origin is told by Mrs. Bronson (quoted by Miss L. Whiting, *op. cit.*, p. 287):

"One day on returning from a drive to Bassano the poet was strangely silent, and no one spoke; finally he announced that he had written a poem since they left Bassano. In response to an exclamation of surprise, he said: 'Oh, it's all in my head, but I shall write it out presently.' His hostess asked if he would not even say what inspired it, to which he returned: 'Well, the birds twittering in the trees suggested it. You know I don't like women to wear these things in their bonnets.' The poem in question proved to be *The Lady and the Painter*."

The poem is thus appropriately placed side by side with *Arcades Ambo*.

Ponte dell' Angelo, Venice

The origin of this poem too is recorded by Mrs. Bronson (*Cornhill Magazine*, February, 1902). It belongs to Browning's last visit but one to Venice, that is to the autumn of 1888, when he was Mrs. Bronson's guest at Ca' Alvisi. He happened to see a book entitled *Curiosità Veneziane*, by Tassini (1863), which contains a number of stories and legends connected with the houses, streets, and bridges of Venice. Among them, the legend of the Ponte dell' Angelo attracted his attention, and, having ascertained from his gondolier that the story was still really current in popular tradition, he subsequently embodied it in this poem. Father Boverio, who is quoted in the last lines of the poem as the authority for it, is the author of the *Annales . . . ordinis minorum S. Francisci qui capucini nuncupantur* (1632–39), to which Browning referred for confirmation of Tassini's record.

Beatrice Signorini

Written early in 1888. Like the *Parleying with Francis Furini* and *Filippo Baldinucci on the Privilege of Burial*, the suggestion for this poem was derived from Baldinucci's *Notizie*.

INTRODUCTION

Flute-Music, with an Accompaniment

A pleasant trifle, written at about the same time as *Beatrice Signorini*.

"Imperante Augusto natus est——"

The volume, and with it Browning's work, ends on a more serious note. The last four poems touch, in different ways, on some of the deeper thoughts of human life. There is no evidence to prove their exact date. This, the first of them, put into the mouth of a Roman who has been listening to a panegyric on Augustus, gives a vivid thumb-nail sketch of that pagan world, which the birth even then taking place in Judæa was to transform and supersede so completely.

The poem has some anachronisms; for while the line "Ten years Triumvir, Consul thirteen times" points to a date about contemporary with the Nativity (Augustus' thirteenth consulship was in B.C. 2, according to the traditional chronology),—and this is no doubt the period intended —Virgil, Horace ("little Flaccus"), and Varius had then all been dead for several years. L. Varius Rufus, who died in B.C. 14, was a poet of considerable repute, though his works, one of which was an epic on Augustus, have not survived.

Development

This poem is so far autobiographical that the poet's father was a scholar and a book-lover, and that Robert Browning made his first acquaintance

with Homer through Pope's translation at a very early date. But the application of the poem is not to the Homeric question, but to those vexed problems of Biblical criticism which were so rife during the later years of the poet's life.

Rephan

This striking poem, like so many others which have been noted above, is due to a recollection of a story read in very early years, namely "How it strikes a Stranger," which forms part of the contents of *The Contributions of Q. Q.*, by Jane Taylor. The authoress, who died in 1824, was well known as the writer of poems for children, notably her *Hymns for Infant Minds*. The "star of my God Rephan" comes, of course, from Acts vii. 43.

Reverie

It is striking—and pleasant—to find that in this poem, written in all probability in the last years of the poet's life, the old antithesis of Power and Love, so prominent in poems nearly half a century earlier, is once more stated as the central point of his faith. It is the antithesis which appears in *Saul*, in *Christmas Eve*, in the *Epistle of Karshish*, in *A Death in the Desert*, in *The Pope*, repeated again and again at intervals as the cardinal belief in the poet's philosophy. *Reverie* restates it once more, and sums it up in two stanzas at the end, which are worthy to take their place with *Rabbi Ben Ezra* as a summary of Browning's creed.

INTRODUCTION

Epilogue

It would be interesting to know the precise date of this poem,—this final and summary expression of the courage and hopefulness which were so characteristic of Browning's outlook upon life and humanity. The faith confessed in these lines was his throughout his life; but there is no reason to doubt that this utterance of it belongs to his last years. In any case he chose it deliberately to be the epilogue to a volume which he must have known would be at least one of his latest deliverances; and it falls as appropriately into its place as Tennyson's *Crossing the Bar*.

An incident connected with this poem deserves to remain on record. It is a reminiscence of the South African war, told by Miss Violet Brooke-Hunt in a letter to the *Spectator* (October 25, 1902):

"On one occasion [at a lecture or concert] I quoted the lines from Browning's Epilogue commencing:

'One who never turned his back, but marched breast forward.'

I was promptly asked to say it over again slowly; pencils and odd scraps of paper were produced, and all over the tent I saw laborious efforts being made to scribble down the verse. The audience included Yeomanry, C.I.V.'s, gunners, sappers, and men from three or four line battalions. I suggested that it would be better to wait until the close of the evening, when those who wished for the verse could stay behind, and I would dictate

it as slowly as they wished. When the time came, more than three hundred men kept their places, and carried away the words pencilled inside pocket Testaments, note-books, on the backs of envelopes, or on any piece of paper that could be raised. 'Mind you give us a fresh one next time, Miss,' remarked a private in a Lancashire regiment. 'Words like that stick in a fellow's head, and come to his mind more than once or twice, I can tell you.'"

On no other note would one wish the collected work of Robert Browning, true poet, true helper of his generation, true glory of the literature of England, to conclude.

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PORTRAIT

ROBERT BROWNING (AGED 77)

From an unpublished photograph by W. H. Grove (1889) *in the possession of Mrs. George M. Smith* . . FRONTISPIECE

JOCOSERIA

JOCOSERIA

1883

WANTING is—what?
Summer redundant,
Blueness abundant,
—Where is the blot?
Beamy the world, yet a blank all the same,
—Framework which waits for a picture to frame:
What of the leafage, what of the flower?
Roses embowering with nought they embower!
Come then, complete incompletion, O comer,
Pant through the blueness, perfect the summer!
Breathe but one breath
Rose-beauty above,
And all that was death
Grows life, grows love,
Grows love!

DONALD

"Will you hear my story also,
  —Huge Sport, brave adventure in plenty?"
The boys were a band from Oxford,
  The oldest of whom was twenty.

The bothy we held carouse in
  Was bright with fire and candle;
Tale followed tale like a merry-go-round
  Whereof Sport turned the handle.

In our eyes and noses—turf-smoke:
  In our ears a tune from the trivet,
Whence "Boiling, boiling," the kettle sang,
  "And ready for fresh Glenlivet."

So, feat capped feat, with a vengeance:
  Truths, though,—the lads were loyal:
"Grouse, five score brace to the bag!
  Deer, ten hours' stalk of the Royal!"

Of boasting, not one bit, boys!
  Only there seemed to settle
Somehow above your curly heads,
  —Plain through the singing kettle,

Palpable through the cloud,
  As each new-puffed Havanna
Rewarded the teller's well-told tale,—
  This vaunt "To Sport—Hosanna!

"Hunt, fish, shoot,
  Would a man fulfil life's duty!
Not to the bodily frame alone
  Does Sport give strength and beauty,

"But character gains in—courage?
  Ay, Sir, and much beside it!
You don't sport, more 's the pity:
  You soon would find, if you tried it,

"Good sportsman means good fellow,
  Sound-hearted he, to the centre;
Your mealy-mouthed mild milksops
  —There 's where the rot can enter!

"There 's where the dirt will breed,
  The shabbiness Sport would banish!
Oh no, Sir, no! In your honoured case
  All such objections vanish.

"'T is known how hard you studied:
  A Double-First—what, the jigger!
Give me but half your Latin and Greek,
  I 'll never again touch trigger!

"Still, tastes are tastes, allow me!
  Allow, too, where there 's keenness
For Sport, there 's little likelihood
  Of a man's displaying meanness!"

So, put on my mettle, I interposed.
  "Will you hear my story?" quoth I.
"Never mind how long since it happed,
  I sat, as we sit, in a bothy;

"With as merry a band of mates, too,
Undergrads all on a level :
(One 's a Bishop, one 's gone to the Bench,
And one 's gone—well, to the Devil.)

"When, lo, a scratching and tapping !
In hobbled a ghastly visitor.
Listen to just what he told us himself
—No need of our playing inquisitor !"

Do you happen to know in Ross-shire
Mount . . . Ben . . . but the name scarce matters :
Of the naked fact I am sure enough
Though I clothe it in rags and tatters.

You may recognize Ben by description ;
Behind him—a moor's immenseness :
Up goes the middle mount of a range,
Fringed with its firs in denseness.

Rimming the edge, its fir-fringe, mind !
For an edge there is, though narrow ;
From end to end of the range, a stripe
Of path runs straight as an arrow.

And the mountaineer who takes that path
Saves himself miles of journey
He has to plod if he crosses the moor
Through heather, peat and burnie.

But a mountaineer he needs must be,
For, look you, right in the middle
Projects bluff Ben—with an end in *ich*—
Why planted there, is a riddle :

Since all Ben's brothers little and big
  Keep rank, set shoulder to shoulder,
And only this burliest out must bulge
  Till it seems—to the beholder

From down in the gully,—as if Ben's breast
  To a sudden spike diminished,
Would signify to the boldest foot
  "All further passage finished!"

Yet the mountaineer who sidles on
  And on to the very bending,
Discovers, if heart and brain be proof,
  No necessary ending.

Foot up, foot down, to the turn abrupt
  Having trod, he, there arriving,
Finds—what he took for a point was breadth,
  A mercy of Nature's contriving.

So, he rounds what, when 't is reached, proves straight,
  From one side gains the other:
The wee path widens—resume the march,
  And he foils you, Ben my brother!

But Donald—(that name, I hope, will do)—
  I wrong him if I call "foiling"
The tramp of the callant, whistling the while
  As blithe as our kettle 's boiling.

He had dared the danger from boyhood up,
  And now,—when perchance was waiting
A lass at the brig below,—'twixt mount
  And moor would he stand debating?

DONALD

Moreover this Donald was twenty-five,
A glory of bone and muscle:
Did a fiend dispute the right of way,
Donald would try a tussle.

Lightsomely marched he out of the broad
On to the narrow and narrow;
A step more, rounding the angular rock,
Reached the front straight as an arrow.

He stepped it, safe on the ledge he stood,
When—whom found he full-facing?
What fellow in courage and wariness too,
Had scouted ignoble pacing,

And left low safety to timid mates,
And made for the dread dear danger,
And gained the height where—who could guess
He would meet with a rival ranger?

'T was a gold-red stag that stood and stared,
Gigantic and magnific,
By the wonder—ay, and the peril—struck
Intelligent and pacific:

For a red deer is no fallow deer
Grown cowardly through park-feeding;
He batters you like a thunderbolt
If you brave his haunts unheeding.

I doubt he could hardly perform *volte-face*
Had valour advised discretion:
You may walk on a rope, but to turn on a rope
No Blondin makes profession.

Yet Donald must turn, would pride permit,
  Though pride ill brooks retiring :
Each eyed each—mute man, motionless beast—
  Less fearing than admiring.

These are the moments when quite new sense,
  To meet some need as novel,
Springs up in the brain : it inspired resource :
  —"Nor advance nor retreat but—grovel!"

And slowly, surely, never a whit
  Relaxing the steady tension
Of eye-stare which binds man to beast,—
  By an inch and inch declension,

Sank Donald sidewise down and down :
  Till flat, breast upwards, lying
At his six-foot length, no corpse more still,
  —"If he cross me! The trick 's worth trying."

Minutes were an eternity ;
  But a new sense was created
In the stag's brain too ; he resolves! Slow, sure,
  With eye-stare unabated,

Feelingly he extends a foot
  Which tastes the way ere it touches
Earth's solid and just escapes man's soft,
  Nor hold of the same unclutches

Till its fellow foot, light as a feather whisk,
  Lands itself no less finely :
So a mother removes a fly from the face
  Of her babe asleep supinely.

And now 't is the haunch and hind foot's turn
—That 's hard: can the beast quite raise it?
Yes, traversing half the prostrate length,
His hoof-tip does not graze it.

Just one more lift! But Donald, you see,
Was sportsman first, man after:
A fancy lightened his caution through,
—He well-nigh broke into laughter.

"It were nothing short of a miracle!
Unrivalled, unexampled—
All sporting feats with this feat matched
Were down and dead and trampled!"

The last of the legs as tenderly
Follows the rest: or never
Or now is the time! His knife in reach,
And his right-hand loose—how clever!

For this can stab up the stomach's soft,
While the left-hand grasps the pastern.
A rise on the elbow, and—now 's the time
Or never: this turn 's the last turn!

I shall dare to place myself by God
Who scanned—for He does—each feature
Of the face thrown up in appeal to Him
By the agonizing creature.

Nay, I hear plain words: "Thy gift brings this!"
Up he sprang, back he staggered,
Over he fell, and with him our friend
—At following game no laggard.

Yet he was not dead when they picked next day
From the gully's depth the wreck of him ;
His fall had been stayed by the stag beneath
Who cushioned and saved the neck of him.

But the rest of his body—why, doctors said,
Whatever could break was broken ;
Legs, arms, ribs, all of him looked like a toast
In a tumbler of port-wine soaken.

"That your life is left you, thank the stag !"
Said they when—the slow cure ended—
They opened the hospital door, and thence
—Strapped, spliced, main fractures mended,

And minor damage left wisely alone,—
Like an old shoe clouted and cobbled,
Out—what went in a Goliath well-nigh,—
Some half of a David hobbled.

"You must ask an alms from house to house :
Sell the stag's head for a bracket,
With its grand twelve tines—I 'd buy it myself—
And use the skin for a jacket !"

He was wiser, made both head and hide
His win-penny : hands and knees on,
Would manage to crawl—poor crab—by the roads
In the misty stalking-season.

And if he discovered a bothy like this,
Why, harvest was sure : folk listened.
He told his tale to the lovers of Sport :
Lips twitched, cheeks glowed, eyes glistened.

And when he had come to the close, and spread
His spoils for the gazers' wonder,
With "Gentlemen, here 's the skull of the stag
I was over, thank God, not under!"—

The company broke out in applause;
"By Jingo, a lucky cripple!
Have a munch of grouse and a hunk of bread,
And a tug, besides, at our tipple!"

And "There 's my pay for your pluck!" cried This,
"And mine for your jolly story!"
Cried That, while T' other—but he was drunk—
Hiccupped "A trump, a Tory!"

I hope I gave twice as much as the rest;
For, as Homer would say, "within grate
Though teeth kept tongue," my whole soul
growled
"Rightly rewarded,—Ingrate!"

SOLOMON AND BALKIS

SOLOMON King of the Jews and the Queen of
Sheba Balkis
Talk on the ivory throne, and we well may con-
jecture their talk is
Solely of things sublime : why else has she sought
Mount Zion,
Climbed the six golden steps, and sat betwixt lion
and lion ?

She proves him with hard questions : before she
has reached the middle
He smiling supplies the end, straight solves them
riddle by riddle ;
Until, dead-beaten at last, there is left no spirit
in her,
And thus would she close the game whereof she
was first beginner :

"O wisest thou of the wise, world's marvel and
well-nigh monster,
One crabbed question more to construe or *vulgo*
conster !
Who are those, of all mankind, a monarch of per-
fect wisdom
Should open to, when they knock at *spheteron do*
—that 's his dome ?"

The King makes tart reply : "Whom else but the
wise his equals
Should he welcome with heart and voice ?—since,
king though he be, such weak walls

Of circumstance—power and pomp—divide souls
each from other
That whoso proves kingly in craft I needs must
acknowledge my brother.

"Come poet, come painter, come sculptor, come
builder—whate'er his condition,
Is he prime in his art? We are peers! My in-
sight has pierced the partition
And hails—for the poem, the picture, the statue,
the building—my fellow!
Gold 's gold though dim in the dust: court-polish
soon turns it yellow.

"But tell me in turn, O thou to thy weakling
sex superior,
That for knowledge hast travelled so far yet
seemest no whit the wearier,—
Who are those, of all mankind, a queen like
thyself, consummate
In wisdom, should call to her side with an affable
'Up hither, come, mate!'"

"The Good are my mates—how else? Why
doubt it?" the Queen upbridled:
"Sure even above the Wise,—or in travel my eyes
have idled,—
I see the Good stand plain: be they rich, poor,
shrewd or simple,
If Good they only are. . . . Permit me to drop
my wimple!"

And in that bashful jerk of her body, she—peace,
thou scoffer!—
Jostled the King'sright-hand stretched courteously
help to proffer,

And so disclosed a portent: all unaware the Prince eyed
The Ring which bore the Name—turned outside now from inside!

The truth-compelling Name!—and at once "I greet the Wise—Oh,
Certainly welcome such to my court—with this proviso:
The building must be my temple, my person stand forth the statue,
The picture my portrait prove, and the poem my praise—you cat, you!"

But Solomon nonplussed? Nay! "Be truthful in turn!" so bade he:
"See the Name, obey its hest!" And at once subjoins the lady
—"Provided the Good are the young, men strong and tall and proper,
Such servants I straightway enlist,—which means . . ." but the blushes stop her.

"Ah, Soul," the Monarch sighed, "that wouldst soar yet ever crawlest,
How comes it thou canst discern the greatest yet choose the smallest,
Unless because heaven is far, where wings find fit expansion,
While creeping on all-fours suits, suffices the earthly mansion?

"Aspire to the Best! But which? There are Bests and Bests so many,
With a *habitat* each for each, earth's Best as much Best as any!

SOLOMON AND BALKIS

On Lebanon roots the cedar—soil lofty, yet stony
and sandy—
While hyssop, of worth in its way, on the wall
grows low but handy.

"Above may the Soul spread wing, spurn body
and sense beneath her;
Below she must condescend to plodding unbuoyed
by æther.
In heaven I yearn for knowledge, account all else
inanity;
On earth I confess an itch for the praise of fools—
that 's Vanity.

"It is nought, it will go, it can never presume
above to trouble me;
But here,—why, it toys and tickles and teases,
howe'er I redouble me
In a doggedest of endeavours to play the indif-
ferent. Therefore,
Suppose we resume discourse? Thou hast
travelled thus far: but wherefore?

"Solely for Solomon's sake, to see whom earth
styles Sagest?"
Through her blushes laughed the Queen. "For
the sake of a Sage? The gay jest!
On high, be communion with Mind—there, Body
concerns not Balkis:
Down here,—do I make too bold? Sage Solomon,
—one fool's small kiss!"

CRISTINA AND MONALDESCHI

Ah, but how each loved each, Marquis!
Here 's the gallery they trod
Both together, he her god,
She his idol,—lend your rod,
Chamberlain!—ay, there they are—"*Quis*
Separabit?"—plain those two
Touching words come into view,
Apposite for me and you:

Since they witness to incessant
Love like ours: King Francis, he—
Diane the adored one, she—
Prototypes of you and me.
Everywhere is carved her Crescent
With his Salamander-sign—
Flame-fed creature: flame benign
To itself or, if malign,

Only to the meddling curious,
—So, be warned, Sir! Where 's my head?
How it wanders! What I said
Merely meant—the creature, fed
Thus on flame, was scarce injurious
Save to fools who woke its ire,
Thinking fit to play with fire.
'T is the Crescent you admire?

Then, be Diane! I 'll be Francis.
Crescents change,—true!—wax and wane,
Woman-like: male hearts retain
Heat nor, once warm, cool again.

So, we figure—such our chance is—
I as man and you as . . . What?
Take offence? My Love forgot
He plays woman, I do not?

I—the woman? See my habit,
Ask my people! Anyhow,
Be we what we may, one vow
Binds us, male or female. Now,—
Stand, Sir! Read! "*Quis separabit?*"
Half a mile of pictured way
Past these palace-walls to-day
Traversed, this I came to say.

You must needs begin to love me;
First I hated, then, at best,
—Have it so!—I acquiesced;
Pure compassion did the rest.
From below thus raised above me,
Would you, step by step, descend,
Pity me, become my friend,
Like me, like less, loathe at end?

That 's the ladder's round you rose by!
That—my own foot kicked away,
Having raised you: let it stay,
Serve you for retreating? Nay.
Close to me you climbed: as close by,
Keep your station, though the peak
Reached proves somewhat bare and bleak!
Woman 's strong if man is weak.

Keep here, loving me forever!
Love's look, gesture, speech, I claim;
Act love, lie love, all the same—
Play as earnest were our game!

Lonely I stood long : 't was clever
When you climbed, before men's eyes,
Spurned the earth and scaled the skies,
Gained my peak and grasped your prize.

Here you stood, then, to men's wonder ;
Here you tire of standing ? Kneel !
Cure what giddiness you feel,
This way ! Do your senses reel ?
Not unlikely ! What rolls under ?
Yawning death in yon abyss
Where the waters whirl and hiss
Round more frightful peaks than this.

Should my buffet dash you thither . . .
But be sage ! No watery grave
Needs await you : seeming brave
Kneel on safe, dear timid slave !
You surmised, when you climbed hither,
Just as easy were retreat
Should you tire, conceive unmeet
Longer patience at my feet ?

Me as standing, you as stooping,—
Who arranged for each the pose ?
Lest men think us friends turned foes,
Keep the attitude you chose !
Men are used to this same grouping—
I and you like statues seen.
You and I, no third between,
Kneel and stand ! That makes the scene.

Mar it—and one buffet . . . Pardon !
Needless warmth—wise words in waste !
'T was prostration that replaced
Kneeling, then ? A proof of taste.

Crouch, not kneel, while I mount guard on
  Prostrate love—become no waif,
  No estray to waves that chafe
  Disappointed—love 's so safe!

Waves that chafe? The idlest fancy!
  Peaks that scare? I think we know
  Walls enclose our sculpture: so
  Grouped, we pose in Fontainebleau.
Up now! Wherefore hesitancy?
  Arm in arm and cheek by cheek,
  Laugh with me at waves and peak!
  Silent still? Why, pictures speak.

See, where Juno strikes Ixion,
  Primatice speaks plainly! Pooh—
  Rather, Florentine Le Roux!
  I 've lost head for who is who—
So it swims and wanders! Fie on
  What still proves me female! Here,
  By the staircase!—for we near
  That dark "Gallery of the Deer."

Look me in the eyes once! Steady!
  Are you faithful now as erst
  On that eve when we two first
  Vowed at Avon, blessed and cursed
Faith and falsehood? Pale already?
  Forward! Must my hand compel
  Entrance—this way? Exit—well,
  Somehow, somewhere. Who can tell?

What if to the self-same place in
  Rustic Avon, at the door
  Of the village church once more,
  Where a tombstone paves the floor

By that holy-water basin
You appealed to—"As, below,
This stone hides its corpse, e'en so
I your secrets hide"? What ho!

Friends, my four! You, Priest, confess him!
I have judged the culprit there:
Execute my sentence! Care
For no mail such cowards wear!
Done, Priest? Then, absolve and bless him!
Now—you three, stab thick and fast,
Deep and deeper! Dead at last?
Thanks, friends—Father, thanks! Aghast?

What one word of his confession
Would you tell me, though I lured
With that royal crown abjured
Just because its bars immured
Love too much? Love burst compression,
Fled free, finally confessed
All its secrets to that breast
Whence . . . let Avon tell the rest!

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT AND FUSELI

Oh but is it not hard, Dear?
  Mine are the nerves to quake at a mouse:
If a spider drops I shrink with fear:
  I should die outright in a haunted house;
While for you—did the danger dared bring help—
From a lion's den I could steal his whelp,
With a serpent round me, stand stock-still,
Go sleep in a churchyard,—so would will
Give me the power to dare and do
Valiantly—just for you!

Much amiss in the head, Dear,
  I toil at a language, tax my brain
Attempting to draw—the scratches here!
  I play, play, practise and all in vain:
But for you—if my triumph brought you pride,
I would grapple with Greek Plays till I died,
Paint a portrait of you—who can tell?
Work my fingers off for your "Pretty well:"
Language and painting and music too,
Easily done—for you!

Strong and fierce in the heart, Dear,
  With—more than a will—what seems a power
To pounce on my prey, love outbroke here
  In flame devouring and to devour.

Such love has laboured its best and worst
To win me a lover ; yet, last as first,
I have not quickened his pulse one beat,
Fixed a moment's fancy, bitter or sweet :
Yet the strong fierce heart's love's labour's due,
Utterly lost, was—you !

ADAM, LILITH, AND EVE

One day it thundered and lightened.
Two women, fairly frightened,
Sank to their knees, transformed, transfixed,
At the feet of the man who sat betwixt;
And "Mercy!" cried each—"if I tell the truth
Of a passage in my youth!"

Said This: "Do you mind the morning
I met your love with scorning?
As the worst of the venom left my lips,
I thought 'If, despite this lie, he strips
The mask from my soul with a kiss—I crawl
His slave,—soul, body and all!'"

Said That: "We stood to be married;
The priest, or someone, tarried;
'If Paradise-door prove locked?' smiled you.
I thought, as I nodded, smiling too,
'Did one, that 's away, arrive—nor late
Nor soon should unlock Hell's gate!'"

It ceased to lighten and thunder.
Up started both in wonder,
Looked round and saw that the sky was clear,
Then laughed "Confess you believed us, Dear!"
"I saw through the joke!" the man replied
They re-seated themselves beside.

IXION

High in the dome, suspended, of Hell, sad triumph, behold us!
Here the revenge of a God, there the amends of a Man.
Whirling forever in torment, flesh once mortal, immortal
Made—for a purpose of hate—able to die and revive,
Pays to the uttermost pang, then, newly for payment replenished,
Doles out — old yet young — agonies ever afresh;
Whence the result above me: torment is bridged by a rainbow,—
Tears, sweat, blood,—each spasm, ghastly once, glorified now.
Wrung, by the rush of the wheel ordained my place of reposing,
Off in a sparklike spray,—flesh become vapour thro' pain,—
Flies the bestowment of Zeus, soul's vaunted bodily vesture,
Made that his feats observed gain the approval of Man,—
Flesh that he fashioned with sense of the earth and the sky and the ocean,
Framed should pierce to the star, fitted to pore on the plant,—

IXION

All, for a purpose of hate, re-framed, re-fashioned,
re-fitted
Till, consummate at length,—lo, the employment of sense!
Pain 's mere minister now to the soul, once pledged to her pleasure—
Soul, if untrammelled by flesh, unapprehensive of pain!
Body, professed soul's slave, which serving beguiled and betrayed her,
Made things false seem true, cheated thro' eye and thro' ear,
Lured thus heart and brain to believe in the lying reported,—
Spurn but the traitorous slave, uttermost atom, away,
What should obstruct soul's rush on the real, the only apparent?
Say I have erred,—how else? Was I Ixion or Zeus?
Foiled by my senses I dreamed; I doubtless awaken in wonder:
This proves shine, that—shade? Good was the evil that seemed?
Shall I, with sight thus gained, by torture be taught I was blind once?
Sisuphos, teaches thy stone—Tantalos, teaches thy thirst
Aught which unaided sense, purged pure, less plainly demonstrates?
No, for the past was dream: now that the dreamers awake,
Sisuphos scouts low fraud, and to Tantalos treason is folly.
Ask of myself, whose form melts on the murderous wheel,

What is the sin which throe and throe prove sin
to the sinner!
Say the false charge was true,—thus do I expiate, say,
Arrogant thought, word, deed,—mere man who conceited me godlike,
Sat beside Zeus, my friend—knelt before Heré, my love!
What were the need but of pitying power to touch and disperse it,
Film-work—eye's and ear's—all the distraction of sense?
How should the soul not see, not hear,—perceive and as plainly
Render, in thought, word, deed, back again truth—not a lie?
"Ay, but the pain is to punish thee!" Zeus, once more for a pastime,
Play the familiar, the frank! Speak and have speech in return!
I was of Thessaly king, there ruled and a people obeyed me:
Mine to establish the law, theirs to obey it or die:
Wherefore? Because of the good to the people, because of the honour
Thence accruing to me, king, the king's law was supreme.
What of the weakling, the ignorant criminal?
Not who, excuseless,
Breaking my law braved death, knowing his deed and its due—
Nay, but the feeble and foolish, the poor transgressor, of purpose
No whit more than a tree, born to erectness of bole,

Palm or plane or pine, we laud if lofty, columnar—
Loathe if athwart, askew,—leave to the axe and the flame!
Where is the vision may penetrate earth and beholding acknowledge
Just one pebble at root ruined the straightness of stem?
Whose fine vigilance follows the sapling, accounts for the failure,
—Here blew wind, so it bent: there the snow lodged, so it broke?
Also the tooth of the beast, bird's bill, mere bite of the insect
Gnawed, gnarled, warped their worst: passive it lay to offence.
King—I was man, no more: what I recognized faulty I punished,
Laying it prone: be sure, more than a man had I proved,
Watch and ward o'er the sapling at birthtime had saved it, nor simply
Owned the distortion's excuse,—hindered it wholly: nay, more—
Even a man, as I sat in my place to do judgment, and pallid
Criminals passing to doom shuddered away at my foot,
Could I have probed thro' the face to the heart, read plain a repentance,
Crime confessed fools' play, virtue ascribed to the wise,
Had I not stayed the consignment to doom, not dealt the renewed ones
Life to retraverse the past, light to retrieve the misdeed?

Thus had I done, and thus to have done much more it behoves thee,
Zeus who madest man—flawless or faulty, thy work!
What if the charge were true, as thou mouthest,—Ixion the cherished
Minion of Zeus grew vain, vied with the godships and fell,
Forfeit thro' arrogance? Stranger! I clothed, with the grace of our human,
Inhumanity—gods, natures I likened to ours.
Man among men I had borne me till gods forsooth must regard me
—Nay, must approve, applaud, claim as a comrade at last.
Summoned to enter their circle, I sat—their equal, how other?
Love should be absolute love, faith is in fulness or nought.
"I am thy friend, be mine!" smiled Zeus: "If Heré attract thee,"
Blushed the imperial cheek, "then—as thy heart may suggest!"
Faith in me sprang to the faith, my love hailed love as its fellow,
"Zeus, we are friends—how fast! Heré, my heart for thy heart!"
Then broke smile into fury of frown, and the thunder of "Hence, fool!"
Then thro' the kiss laughed scorn "Limbs or a cloud was to clasp?"
Then from Olumpos to Erebos, then from the rapture to torment,
Then from the fellow of gods—misery's mate, to the man!

—Man henceforth and forever, who lent from the glow of his nature
Warmth to the cold, with light coloured the black and the blank.
So did a man conceive of your passion, you passion-protesters!
So did he trust, so love—being the truth of your lie!
You to aspire to be Man! Man made you who vainly would ape him:
You are the hollowness, he—filling you, falsifies void.
Even as—witness the emblem, Hell's sad triumph suspended,
Born of my tears, sweat, blood—bursting to vapour above—
Arching my torment, an iris ghostlike startles the darkness,
Cold white—jewelry quenched—justifies, glorifies pain.
Strive, mankind, though strife endure through endless obstruction,
Stage after stage, each rise marred by as certain a fall!
Baffled forever—yet never so baffled but, e'en in the baffling,
When Man's strength proves weak, checked in the body or soul—
Whatsoever the medium, flesh or essence,—Ixion 's
Made for a purpose of hate,—clothing the entity Thou,
—Medium whence that entity strives for the Not-Thou beyond it,
Fire elemental, free, frame unencumbered, the All,—
Never so baffled but—when, on the verge of an alien existence,

Heartened to press, by pangs burst to the infinite Pure,
Nothing is reached but the ancient weakness still that arrests strength,
Circumambient still, still the poor human array,
Pride and revenge and hate and cruelty—all it has burst through,
Thought to escape,—fresh formed, found in the fashion it fled,—
Never so baffled but—when Man pays the price of endeavour,
Thunderstruck, downthrust, Tartaros-doomed to the wheel,—
Then, ay, then, from the tears and sweat and blood of his torment,
E'en from the triumph of Hell, up let him look and rejoice!
What is the influence, high o'er Hell, that turns to a rapture
Pain—and despair's murk mists blends in a rainbow of hope?
What is beyond the obstruction, stage by stage tho' it baffle?
Back must I fall, confess "Ever the weakness I fled"?
No, for beyond, far, far is a Purity all-unobstructed!
Zeus was Zeus—not Man: wrecked by his weakness, I whirl.
Out of the wreck I rise—past Zeus to the Potency o'er him!
I—to have hailed him my friend! I—to have clasped her—my love!
Pallid birth of my pain,—where light, where light is, aspiring
Thither I rise, whilst thou—Zeus, keep the god-ship and sink!

JOCHANAN HAKKADOSH

"THIS now, this other story makes amends
And justifies our Mishna," quoth the Jew
Aforesaid. "Tell it, learnedest of friends!"

A certain morn broke beautiful and blue
O'er Schiphaz city, bringing joy and mirth,
—So had ye deemed; while the reverse was true,
Since one small house there gave a sorrow birth
In such black sort that, to each faithful eye,
Midnight, not morning settled on the earth.

How else, when it grew certain thou wouldst die,
Our much-enlightened master, Israel's prop,
Eximious Jochanan Ben Sabbathai?

Old, yea but, undiminished of a drop,
The vital essence pulsed through heart and brain;
Time left unsickled yet the plenteous crop

On poll and chin and cheek, whereof a skein
Handmaids might weave—hairs silk-soft, silver-white,
Such as the wool-plant's; none the less in vain

Had Physic striven her best against the spite
Of fell disease: the Rabbi must succumb;
And, round the couch whereon in piteous plight

He lay a-dying, scholars,—awe-struck, dumb
Throughout the night-watch,—roused themselves and spoke
One to the other: "Ere death's touch benumb

"His active sense,—while yet 'neath Reason's yoke
Obedient toils his tongue,—befits we claim
The fruit of long experience, bid this oak

"Shed us an acorn which may, all the same,
Grow to a temple-pillar,—dear that day!—
When Israel's scattered seed finds place and name

"Among the envious nations. Lamp us, pray,
Thou the Enlightener! Partest hence in peace?
Hailest without regret—much less, dismay—

"The hour of thine approximate release
From fleshly bondage soul hath found obstruct?
Calmly envisagest the sure increase

"Of knowledge? Eden's tree must hold unplucked
Some apple, sure, has never tried thy tooth,
Juicy with sapience thou hast sought, not sucked?

"Say, does age acquiesce in vanished youth?
Still towers thy purity above—as erst—
Our pleasant follies? Be thy last word—truth!"

The Rabbi groaned; then, grimly, "Last as first
The truth speak I—in boyhood who began
Striving to live an angel, and, amerced

"For such presumption, die now hardly man.
What have I proved of life? To live, indeed,
That much I learned: but here lies Jochanan

"More luckless than stood David when, to speed
His fighting with the Philistine, they brought
Saul's harness forth: whereat, 'Alack, I need

"'Armour to arm me, but have never fought
With sword and spear, nor tricd to manage shield,
Proving arms' use, as well-trained warrior ought.

"'Only a sling and pebbles can I wield!'
So he: while I, contrariwise, 'No trick
Of weapon helpful on the battle-field

"'Comes unfamiliar to my theoric:
But, bid me put in practice what I know,
Give me a sword—it stings like Moses' stick,

"'A serpent I let drop apace.' E'en so,
I,—able to comport me at each stage
Of human life as never here below

"Man played his part,—since mine the heritage
Of wisdom carried to that perfect pitch,
Ye rightly praise,—I, therefore, who, thus sage,

"Could sure act man triumphantly, enrich
Life's annals with example how I played
Lover, Bard, Soldier, Statist,—(all of which

"Parts in presentment failing, cries invade
The world's ear—'Ah, the Past, the pearl-gift thrown
To hogs, time's opportunity we made

"'So light of, only recognized when flown!
Had we been wise!')—in fine, I—wise enough,—
What profit brings me wisdom never shown

"Just when its showing would from each rebuff
Shelter weak virtue, threaten back to bounds
Encroaching vice, tread smooth each track too
rough

"For youth's unsteady footstep, climb the rounds
Of life's long ladder, one by slippery one,
Yet make no stumble? Me hard fate confounds

"With that same crowd of wailers I outrun
By promising to teach another cry
Of more hilarious mood than theirs, the sun

"I look my last at is insulted by.
What cry,—ye ask? Give ear on every side!
Witness yon Lover! 'How entrapped am I!

"'Methought, because a virgin's rose-lip vied
With ripe Khubbezleh's, needs must beauty mate
With meekness and discretion in a bride:

"'Bride she became to me who wail—too late—
Unwise I loved!' That 's one cry. 'Mind 's my
gift:
I might have loaded me with lore, full weight

"'Pressed down and running over at each rift
O' the brain-bag where the famished clung and fed.
I filled it with what rubbish!—would not sift

"'The wheat from chaff, sound grain from musty
—shed
Poison abroad as oft as nutriment—
And sighing say but as my fellows said,

"'*Unwise I learned!*' That 's two. 'In dwarf's-
play spent
Was giant's prowess: warrior all unversed
In war's right waging, I struck brand, was lent

"'For steel's fit service, on mere stone—and
cursed
Alike the shocked limb and the shivered steel,
Seeing too late the blade's true use which erst

"'How was I blind to! My cry swells the peal—
Unwise I fought!' That 's three. But wherefore
waste
Breath on the wailings longer? Why reveal

"A root of bitterness whereof the taste
Is noisome to Humanity at large?
First we get Power, but Power absurdly placed

"In Folly's keeping, who resigns her charge
To Wisdom when all Power grows nothing worth:
Bones marrowless are mocked with helm and targe

"When, like your Master's, soon below the earth
With worms shall warfare only be. Farewell,
Children! I die a failure since my birth!"

"Not so!" arose a protest as, pell-mell,
They pattered from his chamber to the street,
Bent on a last resource. Our Targums tell

That such resource there is. Put case, there
meet
The Nine Points of Perfection—rarest chance—
Within some saintly teacher whom the fleet

Years, in their blind implacable advance,
O'ertake before fit teaching born of these
Have magnified his scholars' countenance,—

If haply folk compassionating please
To render up—according to his store,
Each one—a portion of the life he sees

Hardly worth saving when 't is set before
Earth's benefit should the Saint, Hakkadosh,
Favoured thereby, attain to full fourscore—
If such contribute (Scoffer, spare thy "Bosh!")
A year, a month, a day, an hour—to eke
Life out,—in him away the gift shall wash

That much of ill-spent time recorded, streak
The twilight of the so-assisted sage
With a new sunrise: truth, though strange to speak!

Quick to the doorway, then, where youth and age,
All Israel, thronging, waited for the last
News of the loved one. "'T is the final stage:

"Art's utmost done, the Rabbi's feet tread fast
The way of all flesh!" So announced that apt
Olive-branch Tsaddik: "Yet, O Brethren, cast

"No eye to earthward! Look where heaven has clapped
Morning's extinguisher—yon ray-shot robe
Of sun-threads—on the constellation mapped

"And mentioned by our Elders,—yea, from Job
Down to Satam,—as figuring forth—what?
Perpend a mystery! Ye call it *Dob*—

"'The Bear': I trow, a wiser name than that
Were *Aisch*—'The Bier': a corpse those four stars hold,
Which—are not those Three Daughters weeping at,

"*Banoth?* I judge so: list while I unfold
The reason. As in twice twelve hours this Bier
Goes and returns, about the East-cone rolled,

"So may a setting luminary here
Be rescued from extinction, rolled anew
Upon its track of labour, strong and clear,

"About the Pole—that Salem, every Jew
Helps to build up when thus he saves some Saint
Ordained its architect. Ye grasp the clue

"To all ye seek? The Rabbi's lamp-flame faint
Sinks: would ye raise it? Lend then life from yours,
Spare each his oil-drop! Do I need acquaint

"The Chosen how self-sacrifice ensures
Ten-fold requital?—urge ye emulate
The fame of those Old Just Ones death procures

"Such praise for, that 't is now men's sole debate
Which of the Ten, who volunteered at Rome
To die for glory to our Race, was great

"Beyond his fellows? Was it thou—the comb
Of iron carded, flesh from bone, away,
While thy lips sputtered thro' their bloody foam

"Without a stoppage (O brave Akiba!)
'Hear, Israel, our Lord God is One'? Or thou,
Jischab?—who smiledst, burning, since there lay,

"Burning along with thee, our Law! I trow,
Such martyrdom might tax flesh to afford:
While that for which I make petition now,

"To what amounts it? Youngster, wilt thou hoard
Each minute of long years thou look'st to spend
In dalliance with thy spouse? Hast thou so soared,

"Singer of songs, all out of sight of friend
And teacher, warbling like a woodland bird,
There 's left no Selah, 'twixt two psalms, to lend

"Our late-so-tuneful quirist? Thou, averred
The fighter born to plant our lion-flag
Once more on Zion's mount,—doth, all-unheard,

"My pleading fail to move thee? Toss some rag
Shall staunch our wound, some minute never missed
From swordsman's lustihood like thine! Wilt lag

"In liberal bestowment, show close fist
When open palm we look for,—thou, wide-known
For statecraft? whom, 't is said, an if thou list,

"The Shah himself would seat beside his throne,
So valued were advice from thee" . . . But here
He stopped short: such a hubbub! Not alone

From those addressed, but, far as well as near,
The crowd broke into clamour: "Mine, mine, mine—
Lop from my life the excrescence, never fear!

"At me thou lookedst, markedst me! Assign
To me that privilege of granting life—
Mine, mine!" Then he: "Be patient! I combine

"The needful portions only, wage no strife
With Nature's law nor seek to lengthen out
The Rabbi's day unduly. 'T is the knife

"I stop,—would cut its thread too short. About
As much as helps life last the proper term,
The appointed Fourscore,—that I crave, and scout

"A too-prolonged existence. Let the worm
Change at fit season to the butterfly!
And here a story strikes me, to confirm

"This judgment. Of our worthies, none ranks high
As Perida who kept the famous school:
None rivalled him in patience: none! For why?

"In lecturing it was his constant rule,
Whatever he expounded, to repeat
—Ay, and keep on repeating, lest some fool

"Should fail to understand him fully—(feat
Unparalleled, Uzzean!)—do ye mark?—
Five hundred times! So might he entrance beat

"For knowledge into howsoever dark
And dense the brain-pan. Yet it happed, at close
Of one especial lecture, not one spark

"Of light was found to have illumed the rows
Of pupils round their pedagogue. 'What, still
Impenetrable to me? Then—here goes!'

"And for a second time he sets the rill
Of knowledge running, and five hundred times
More re-repeats the matter—and gains *nil*.

"Out broke a voice from heaven: 'Thy patience climbs
Even thus high. Choose! Wilt thou, rather, quick
Ascend to bliss—or, since thy zeal sublimes

"'Such drudgery, will thy back still bear its crick,
Bent o'er thy class,—thy voice drone spite of drouth,—
Five hundred years more at thy desk wilt stick?'

"'To heaven with me!' was in the good man's
mouth,
When all his scholars,—cruel-kind were they!—
Stopped utterance, from East, West, North and
South,

"Rending the welkin with their shout of 'Nay—
No heaven as yet for our instructor! Grant
Five hundred years on earth for Perida!'

"And so long did he keep instructing! Want
Our Master no such misery! I but take
Three months of life marital. Ministrant

"Be thou of so much, Poet! Bold I make,
Swordsman, with thy frank offer!—and conclude,
Statist, with thine! One year,—ye will not shake

"My purpose to accept no more. So rude?
The very boys and girls, forsooth, must press
And proffer their addition? Thanks! The mood

"Is laudable, but I reject, no less,
One month, week, day of life more. Leave my
gown,
Ye overbold ones! Your life's gift, you guess,

"Were good as any? Rudesby, get thee down!
Set my feet free, or fear my staff! Farewell,
Seniors and saviours, sharers of renown

"With Jochanan henceforward!" Straightway
fell
Sleep on the sufferer; who awoke in health,
Hale everyway, so potent was the spell.

O the rare Spring-time! Who is he by stealth
Approaches Jochanan?—embowered that sits
Under his vine and figtree mid the wealth
Of garden-sights and sounds, since intermits
Never the turtle's coo, nor stays nor stints
The rose her smell. In homage that befits

The musing Master, Tsaddik, see, imprints
A kiss on the extended foot, low bends
Forehead to earth, then, all-obsequious, hints

"What if it should be time? A period ends—
That of the Lover's gift—his quarter-year
Of lustihood: 't is just thou make amends,

"Return that loan with usury: so, here
Come I, of thy Disciples delegate,
Claiming our lesson from thee. Make appear

"Thy profit from experience! Plainly state
How men should Love!" Thus he: and to him
thus
The Rabbi: "Love, ye call it?—rather, Hate!

"What wouldst thou? Is it needful I discuss
Wherefore new sweet wine, poured in bottles caked
With old strong wine's deposit, offers us

"Spoilt liquor we recoil from, thirst-unslaked?
Like earth-smoke from a crevice, out there wound
Languors and yearnings: not a sense but ached

"Weighed on by fancied form and feature, sound
Of silver word and sight of sunny smile:
No beckoning of a flower-branch, no profound

"Purple of noon-oppression, no light wile
O'the West wind, but transformed itself till—brief—
Before me stood the phantasy ye style

"Youth's love, the joy that shall not come to grief,
Born to endure, eternal, unimpaired
By custom the accloyer, time the thief.

"Had Age's hard cold knowledge only spared
That ignorance of Youth! But now the dream,
Fresh as from Paradise, alighting fared

"As fares the pigeon, finding what may seem
Her nest's safe hollow holds a snake inside
Coiled to enclasp her. See, Eve stands supreme

"In youth and beauty! Take her for thy bride!
What Youth deemed crystal, Age finds out was
dew
Morn set a-sparkle, but which noon quick dried

"While Youth bent gazing at its red and blue
Supposed perennial,—never dreamed the sun
Which kindled the display would quench it too.

"Graces of shape and colour—everyone
With its appointed period of decay
When ripe to purpose! 'Still, these dead and done,

"'Survives the woman-nature—the soft sway
Of undefinable omnipotence
O'er our strong male-stuff, we of Adam's clay.'

"Ay, if my physics taught not why and whence
The attraction! Am I like the simple steer
Who, from his pasture lured inside the fence

"Where yoke and goad await him, holds that mere
Kindliness prompts extension of the hand
Hollowed for barley, which drew near and near

"His nose—in proof that, of the horned band,
The farmer best affected him? Beside,
Steer, since his calfhood, got to understand

"Farmers a many in the world so wide
Were ready with a handful just as choice
Or choicer—maize and cummin, treats untried.

"Shall I wed wife, and all my days rejoice
I gained the peacock? 'Las me, round I look,
And lo—'With me thou wouldst have blamed no
voice

"'Like hers that daily deafens like a rook:
I am the phœnix!'—'I, the lark, the dove,
—The owl,' for aught knows he who blindly took

"Peacock for partner, while the vale, the grove,
The plain held bird-mates in abundance. There!
Youth, try fresh capture! Age has found out Love

"Long ago. War seems better worth man's care.
But leave me! Disappointment finds a balm
Haply in slumber." "This first step o' the stair

"To knowledge fails me, but the victor's palm
Lies on the next to tempt him overleap
A stumbling-block. Experienced, gather calm,

"Thou excellence of Judah, cured by sleep
Which ushers in the Warrior, to replace
The Lover! At due season I shall reap

"Fruit of my planting!" So, with lengthened face,
Departed Tsaddik: and three moons more waxed
And waned, and not until the Summer-space

Waned likewise, any second visit taxed
The Rabbi's patience. But at three months' end,
Behold, supine beneath a rock, relaxed

The sage lay musing till the noon should spend
Its ardour. Up comes Tsaddik, who but he,
With "Master, may I warn thee, nor offend,

"That time comes round again? We look to see
Sprout from the old branch—not the youngling twig—
But fruit of sycamine: deliver me,

"To share among my fellows, some plump fig,
Juicy as seedy! That same man of war,
Who, with a scantling of his store, made big

"Thy starveling nature, caused thee, safe from scar,
To share his gains by long acquaintanceship
With bump and bruise and all the knocks that are

"Of battle dowry,—he bids loose thy lip,
Explain the good of battle! Since thou know'st
Let us know likewise! Fast the moments slip,

"More need that we improve them!"—"Ay, we boast,
We warriors in our youth, that with the sword
Man goes the swiftliest to the uttermost—

"Takes the straight way thro' lands yet unexplored
To absolute Right and Good,—may so obtain
God's glory and man's weal too long ignored,

"Too late attained by preachments all in vain—
The passive process. Knots get tangled worse
By toying with : does cut cord close again ?

"Moreover there is blessing in the curse
Peace-praisers call war. What so sure evolves
All the capacities of soul, proves nurse

"Of that self-sacrifice in men which solves
The riddle—*Wherein differs Man from beast ?*
Foxes boast cleverness and courage wolves :

"Nowhere but in mankind is found the least
Touch of an impulse 'To our fellows—good
I' the highest !—not diminished but increased

"'By the condition plainly understood
—Such good shall be attained at price of hurt
I'the highest to ourselves !' Fine sparks, that brood

"Confusedly in Man, 't is war bids spurt
Forth into flame : as fares the meteor-mass,
Whereof no particle but holds inert

"Some seed of light and heat, however crass
The enclosure, yet avails not to discharge
Its radiant birth before there come to pass

"Some push external,—strong to set at large
Those dormant fire-seeds, whirl them in a trice
Through heaven and light up earth from marge
to marge :

"Since force by motion makes—what erst was
ice—
Crash into fervency and so expire,
Because some Djinn has hit on a device

"For proving the full prettiness of fire!
Ay, thus we prattle—young: but old—why, first,
Where 's that same Right and Good—(the wise inquire)—

"So absolute, it warrants the outburst
Of blood, tears, all war's woeful consequence,
That comes of the fine flaring? Which plague cursed

"The more your benefited Man—offence,
Or what suppressed the offender? Say it did—
Show us the evil cured by violence,

"Submission cures not also! Lift the lid
From the maturing crucible, we find
Its slow sure coaxing-out of virtue hid

"In that same meteor-mass, hath uncombined
Those particles and, yielding for result
Gold, not mere flame, by so much leaves behind

"The heroic product. E'en the simple cult
Of Edom's children wisely bids them turn
Cheek to the smiter with '*Sic Jesus vult.*'

"Say there 's a tyrant by whose death we earn
Freedom, and justify a war to wage:
Good!—were we only able to discern

"Exactly how to reach and catch and cage
Him only and no innocent beside!
Whereas the folk whereon war wreaks its rage

"—How shared they his ill-doing? Far and wide
The victims of our warfare strew the plain,
Ten thousand dead, whereof not one but died

"In faith that vassals owed their suzerain
Life: therefore each paid tribute,—honest soul,—
To that same Right and Good ourselves are fain

"To call exclusively our end. From bole
(Since ye accept in me a sycamine)
Pluck, eat, digest a fable—yea, the sole

"Fig I afford you! 'Dost thou dwarf my vine?'
(So did a certain husbandman address
The tree which faced his field), 'Receive condign

"'Punishment, prompt removal by the stress
Of axe I forthwith lay unto thy root!'
Long did he hack and hew, the root no less

"As long defied him, for its tough strings shoot
As deep down as the boughs above aspire:
All that he did was—shake to the tree's foot

"Leafage and fruitage, things we most require
For shadow and refreshment: which good deed
Thoroughly done, behold the axe-haft tires

"His hand, and he desisting leaves unfreed
The vine he hacked and hewed for. Comes a frost,
One natural night's work, and there 's little need

"Of hacking, hewing: lo, the tree 's a ghost!
Perished it starves, black death from topmost bough
To farthest-reaching fibre! Shall I boast

"My rough work,—warfare,—helped more? Loving, now—
That, by comparison, seems wiser, since
The loving fool was able to avow

"He could effect his purpose, just evince
Love's willingness,—once 'ware of what she lacked,
His loved one,—to go work for that, nor wince

"At self-expenditure: he neither hacked
Nor hewed, but when the lady of his field
Required defence because the sun attacked,

"He, failing to obtain a fitter shield,
Would interpose his body, and so blaze,
Blest in the burning. Ah, were mine to wield

"The intellectual weapon—poet-lays,—
How preferably had I sung one song
Which . . . but my sadness sinks me: go your ways!

"I sleep out disappointment." "Come along,
Never lose heart! There 's still as much again
Of our bestowment left to right the wrong

"Done by its earlier moiety—explain
Wherefore, who may! The Poet's mood comes next.
Was he not wishful the poetic vein

"Should pulse within him? Jochanan, thou
reck'st
Little of what a generous flood shall soon
Float thy clogged spirit free and unperplexed

"Above dry dubitation! Song 's the boon
Shall make amends for my untoward mistake
That Joshua-like thou couldst bid sun and
moon—

"Fighter and Lover,—which for most men make
All they descry in heaven,—stand both stock-still
And lend assistance. Poet shalt thou wake!"

Autumn brings Tsaddik. "Ay, there speeds the rill
Loaded with leaves: a scowling sky, beside:
The wind makes olive-trees up yonder hill

"Whiten and shudder—symptoms far and wide
Of gleaning-time's approach; and glean good store
May I presume to trust we shall, thou tried

"And ripe experimenter! Three months more
Have ministered to growth of Song: that graft
Into thy sterile stock has found at core

"Moisture, I warrant, hitherto unquaffed
By boughs, however florid, wanting sap
Of prose-experience which provides the draught

"Which song-sprouts, wanting, wither: vain we tap
A youngling stem all green and immature:
Experience must secret the stuff, our hap

"Will be to quench Man's thirst with, glad and sure
That fancy wells up through corrective fact:
Missing which test of truth, though flowers allure

"The goodman's eye with promise, soon the pact
Is broken, and 't is flowers,—mere words,—he finds
When things,—that 's fruit,—he looked for. Well, once cracked

"The nut, how glad my tooth the kernel grinds!
Song may henceforth boast substance! Therefore, hail
Proser and poet, perfect in both kinds!

"Thou from whose eye hath dropped the envious scale
Which hides the truth of things and substitutes
Deceptive show, unaided optics fail

"To transpierce,—hast entrusted to the lute's
Soft but sure guardianship some unrevealed
Secret shall lift mankind above the brutes

"As only knowledge can?" "A fount unsealed"
(Sighed Jochanan) "should seek the heaven in leaps
To die in dew-gems—not find death, congealed

"By contact with the cavern's nether deeps,
Earth's secretest foundation where, enswathed
In dark and fear, primæval mystery sleeps—

"Petrific fount wherein my fancies bathed
And straight turned ice. My dreams of good and fair
In soaring upwards had dissolved, unscathed

"By any influence of the kindly air,
Singing, as each took flight, The Future—that 's
Our destination, mists turn rainbows there,

"Which sink to fog, confounded in the flats
O' the Present! Day 's the song-time for the lark,
Night for her music boasts but owls and bats.

"And what 's the Past but night—the deep and dark
Ice-spring I speak of, corpse-thicked with its drowned
Dead fancies which no sooner touched the mark

"They aimed at—fact—than all at once they found
Their film-wings freeze, henceforth unfit to reach
And roll in æther, revel—robed and crowned

"As truths, confirmed by falsehood all and each—
Sovereign and absolute and ultimate!
Up with them, skyward, Youth, ere Age impeach

"Thy least of promises to re-instate
Adam in Eden! Sing on, ever sing,
Chirp till thou burst!—the fool cicada's fate,

"Who holds that after Summer next comes Spring,
Than Summer's self sun-warmed, spice-scented more.
Fighting was better! There, no fancy-fling

"Pitches you past the point was reached of yore
By Sampsons, Abners, Joabs, Judases,
The mighty men of valour who, before

"Our little day, did wonders none profess
To doubt were fable and not fact, so trust
By fancy-flights to emulate much less.

"Were I a Statesman, now! Why, that were just
To pinnacle my soul, mankind above,
A-top the universe: no vulgar lust

"To gratify—fame, greed, at this remove
Looked down upon so far—or overlooked
So largely, rather—that mine eye should rove

"World-wide and rummage earth, the many-nooked,
Yet find no unit of the human flock
Caught straying but straight comes back hooked and crooked

"By the strong shepherd who, from out his stock
Of aids proceeds to treat each ailing fleece,
Here stimulate to growth, curtail and dock

"There, baldness or excrescence,—that, with
grease,
This, with up-grubbing of the bristly patch
Born of the tick-bite. How supreme a peace

"Steals o'er the Statist,—while, in wit, a match
For shrewd Ahithophel, in wisdom . . . well,
His name escapes me—somebody, at watch

"And ward, the fellow of Ahithophel
In guidance of the Chosen!"—at which word
Eyes closed and fast asleep the Rabbi fell.

"Cold weather!" shivered Tsaddik. "Yet the
hoard
Of the sagacious ant shows garnered grain,
Ever abundant most when fields afford

"Least pasture, and alike disgrace the plain
Tall tree and lowly shrub. 'T is so with us
Mortals: our age stores wealth ye seek in vain

"While busy youth culls just what we discuss
At leisure in the last days: and the last
Truly are these for Jochanan, whom thus

"I make one more appeal to! Thine amassed
Experience, now or never, let escape
Some portion of! For I perceive aghast

"The end approaches, while they jeer and jape,
These sons of Shimei: 'Justify your boast!
What have ye gained from Death by twelve
months' rape?'

"Statesman, what cure hast thou for—least and
most—
Popular grievances? What nostrum, say,
Will make the Rich and Poor, expertly dosed,

"Forget disparity, bid each go gay
That, with his bauble,—with his burden, this?
Propose an alkahest shall melt away

"Men's lacquer, show by prompt analysis
Which is the metal, which the make-believe,
So that no longer brass shall find, gold miss

"Coinage and currency? Make haste, retrieve
The precious moments, Master!" Whereunto
There snarls an "Ever laughing in thy sleeve,

"Pert Tsaddik? Youth indeed sees plain a clue
To guide man where life's wood is intricate:
How shall he fail to thrid its thickest through

"When every oak-trunk takes the eye? Elate
He goes from bole to brushwood, plunging finds—
Smothered in briars—that the small 's the great!

"All men are men: I would all minds were minds!
Whereas 't is just the many's mindless mass
That most needs helping: labourers and hinds

"We legislate for—not the cultured class
Which law-makes for itself nor needs the whip
And bridle,—proper help for mule and ass,

"Did the brutes know! In vain our statesmanship
Strives at contenting the rough multitude:
Still the ox cries "'T is me thou shouldst equip

"'With equine trappings!' or, in humbler mood,
'Cribful of corn for me! and, as for work—
Adequate rumination o'er my food!'

"Better remain a Poet! Needs it irk
Such an one if light, kindled in his sphere,
Fail to transfuse the Mizraim cold and murk

"Round about Goshen? Though light disappear,
Shut inside,—temporary ignorance
Got outside of, lo, light emerging clear

"Shows each astonished starer the expanse
Of heaven made bright with knowledge! That's
the way,
The only way—I see it at a glance—

"To legislate for earth! As poet. . . . Stay!
What is . . . I would that . . . were it . . . I
had been . . .
O sudden change, as if my arid clay

"Burst into bloom! . . ." "A change indeed, I
ween,
And change the last!" sighed Tsaddik as he kissed
The closing eyelids. "Just as those serene

"¡Princes of Night apprised me! Our acquist
Of life is spent, since corners only four
Hath Aisch, and each in turn was made desist

"In passage round the Pole (O Mishna's lore—
Little it profits here!) by strenuous tug
Of friends who eked out thus to full fourscore

"The Rabbi's years. I see each shoulder shrug!
What have we gained? Away the Bier may roll!
To-morrow, when the Master's grave is dug,

"In with his body I may pitch the scroll
I hoped to glorify with, text and gloss,
My Science of Man's Life: one blank 's the whole!

"Love, war, song, statesmanship—no gain, all loss,
The stars' bestowment! We on our return
To-morrow merely find—not gold but dross,

"The body not the soul. Come, friends, we learn
At least thus much by our experiment—
That—that . . . well, find what, whom it may
concern!"

But next day through the city rumours went
Of a new persecution; so, they fled
All Israel, each man,—this time,—from his tent,

Tsaddik among the foremost. When, the dread
Subsiding, Israel ventured back again
Some three months after, to the cave they sped

Where lay the Sage,—a reverential train!
Tsaddik first enters. "What is this I view?
The Rabbi still alive? No stars remain

"Of Aisch to stop within their courses. True,
I mind me, certain gamesome boys must urge
Their offerings on me: can it be—one threw

"Life at him and it stuck? There needs the scourge
To teach that urchin manners! Prithee, grant
Forgiveness if we pretermit thy dirge

"Just to explain no friend was ministrant,
This time, of life to thee! Some jackanapes,
I gather, has presumed to foist his scant

"Scurvy unripe existence—wilding grapes
Grass-green and sorrel-sour—on that grand wine,
Mighty as mellow, which, so fancy shapes,

"May fitly image forth this life of thine
Fed on the last low fattening lees—condensed
Elixir, no milk-mildness of the vine!

"Rightly with Tsaddik wert thou now incensed
Had he been witting of the mischief wrought
When, for elixir, verjuice he dispensed!"

And slowly woke,—like Shushan's flower besought
By over-curious handling to unloose
The curtained secrecy wherein she thought

Her captive bee, mid store of sweets to choose,
Would loll, in gold pavilioned lie unteased,
Sucking on, sated never,—whose, O whose

Might seem that countenance, uplift, all eased
Of old distraction and bewilderment,
Absurdly happy? "How ye have appeased

"The strife within me, bred this whole content,
This utter acquiescence in my past,
Present and future life,—by whom was lent

"The power to work this miracle at last,—
Exceeds my guess. Though—*ignorance confirmed*
By knowledge sounds like paradox, I cast

"Vainly about to tell you—fitlier termed—
Of calm struck by encountering opposites,
Each nullifying either! Henceforth wormed

"From out my heart is every snake that bites
The dove that else would brood there: doubt,
which kills
With hiss of 'What if sorrows end delights?'

"Fear which stings ease with 'Work the Master
wills!'
Experience which coils round and strangles quick
Each hope with 'Ask the Past if hoping skills

"'To work accomplishment, or proves a trick
Wiling thee to endeavour! Strive, fool, stop
Nowise, so live, so die—that 's law! why kick

"'Against the pricks?' All out-wormed! Slum-
ber, drop
Thy films once more and veil the bliss within!
Experience strangle hope? Hope waves a-top

"Her wings triumphant! Come what will, I win,
Whoever loses! Every dream 's assured
Of soberest fulfilment. Where 's a sin

"Except in doubting that the light, which lured
The unwary into darkness, meant no wrong
Had I but marched on bold, nor paused immured

"By mists I should have pressed thro', passed
along
My way henceforth rejoicing? Not the boy's
Passionate impulse he conceits so strong,

"Which, at first touch, truth, bubble-like, de-
stroys,—
Not the man's slow conviction 'Vanity
Of vanities—alike my griefs and joys!'

"Ice!—thawed (look up) each bird, each insect
by—
(Look round) by all the plants that break in bloom,
(Look down) by every dead friend's memory

"That smiles 'Am I the dust within my tomb?'
Not either, but both these—amalgam rare—
Mix in a product, not from Nature's womb,

"But stuff which He the Operant—who shall dare
Describe His operation?—strikes alive
And thaumaturgic. I nor know nor care

"How from this tohu-bohu—hopes which dive,
And fears which soar—faith, ruined through and
through
By doubt, and doubt, faith treads to dust—revive

"In some surprising sort,—as see, they do!—
Not merely foes no longer but fast friends.
What does it mean unless—O strange and new

"Discovery!—this life proves a wine-press—
blends
Evil and good, both fruits of Paradise,
Into a novel drink which—who intends

"To quaff, must bear a brain for ecstasies
Attempered, not this all-inadequate
Organ which, quivering within me, dies

"—Nay, lives!—what, how,—too soon, or else
too late—
I was—I am . . ." ("He babbleth!" Tsaddik
mused)
"O Thou Almighty who canst re-instate

"Truths in their primal clarity, confused
By man's perception, which is man's and made
To suit his service,—how, once disabused

"Of reason which sees light half shine half shade,
Because of flesh, the medium that adjusts
Purity to his visuals, both an aid

"And hindrance,—how to eyes earth's air encrusts,
When purged and perfect to receive truth's beam
Pouring itself on the new sense it trusts

"With all its plenitude of power,—how seen
The intricacies now, of shade and shine,
Oppugnant natures—Right and Wrong, we deem

"Irreconcilable? O eyes of mine,
Freed now of imperfection, ye avail
To see the whole sight, nor may uncombine

"Henceforth what, erst divided, caused you
quail—
So huge the chasm between the false and true,
The dream and the reality! All hail,

"Day of my soul's deliverance—day the new,
The never-ending! What though every shape
Whereon I wreaked my yearning to pursue

"Even to success each semblance of escape
From my own bounded self to some all-fair
All-wise external fancy, proved a rape

"Like that old giant's, feigned of fools—on air,
Not solid flesh? How otherwise? To love—
That lesson was to learn not here—but there—

"On earth, not here! 'T is there we learn,—
there prove
Our parts upon the stuff we needs must spoil,
Striving at mastery, there bend above

"The spoiled clay potsherds, many a year of toil
Attests the potter tried his hand upon,
Till sudden he arose, wiped free from soil

"His hand, cried 'So much for attempt—anon
Performance! Taught to mould the living vase,
What matter the cracked pitchers dead and gone?'

"Could I impart and could thy mind embrace
The secret, Tsaddik!" "Secret none to me!"
Quoth Tsaddik, as the glory on the face

Of Jochanan was quenched. "The truth I see
Of what that excellence of Judah wrote,
Doughty Halaphta. This a case must be

"Wherein, though the last breath have passed
the throat,
So that 'The man is dead' we may pronounce,
Yet is the Ruach—(thus do we denote

"The imparted Spirit)—in no haste to bounce
From its entrusted Body,—some three days
Lingers ere it relinquish to the pounce

"Of hawk-clawed Death his victim. Further says
Halaphta, 'Instances have been, and yet
Again may be, when saints, whose earthly ways

"'Tend to perfection, very nearly get
To heaven while still on earth: and, as a fine
Interval shows where waters pure have met

"'Waves brackish, in a mixture, sweet with brine,
That 's neither sea nor river but a taste
Of both—so meet the earthly and divine

"'And each is either.' Thus I hold him graced—
Dying on earth, half inside and half out,
Wholly in heaven, who knows? My mind embraced

"Thy secret, Jochanan, how dare I doubt?
Follow thy Ruach, let earth, all it can,
Keep of the leavings!" Thus was brought about

The sepulture of Rabbi Jochanan:
Thou hast him,—sinner-saint, live-dead, boy-man,—
Schiphaz, on Bendimir, in Farzistan!

NOTE.—This story can have no better authority than that of the treatise, existing dispersedly in fragments of Rabbinical writing, מישך ישל רבי'ם בדים, from which I might have helped myself more liberally. Thus, instead of the simple reference to "Moses' stick," —but what if I make amends by attempting three illustrations, when some thirty might be composed on the same subject, equally justifying that pithy proverb ממשה עד משה לא קם במשה.

I

MOSES the Meek was thirty cubits high,
  The staff he strode with—thirty cubits long:
  And when he leapt, so muscular and strong
Was Moses that his leaping neared the sky
By thirty cubits more: we learn thereby
  He reached full ninety cubits—am I wrong?—
  When, in a fight slurred o'er by sacred song,
With staff outstretched he took a leap to try
The just dimensions of the giant Og.
  And yet he barely touched—this marvel lacked
Posterity to crown earth's catalogue
  Of marvels—barely touched—to be exact—
The giant's ankle-bone, remained a frog
  That fain would match an ox in stature: fact!

II

And this same fact has met with unbelief!
How saith a certain traveller? "Young, I chanced
To come upon an object—if thou canst,
Guess me its name and nature! 'T was, in brief,
White, hard, round, hollow, of such length, in chief,
—And this is what especially enhanced
My wonder—that it seemed, as I advanced,
Never to end. Bind up within thy sheaf
Of marvels, this—Posterity! I walked
From end to end,—four hours walked I, who go
A goodly pace,—and found—I have not baulked
Thine expectation, Stranger? Ay or No?
'T was but Og's thigh-bone, all the while, I stalked
Alongside of: respect to Moses, though!"

III

Og's thigh-bone—if ye deem its measure strange,
Myself can witness to much length of shank
Even in birds. Upon a water's bank
Once halting, I was minded to exchange
Noon heat for cool. Quoth I "On many a grange
I have seen storks perch—legs both long and lank:
Yon stork's must touch the bottom of this tank,
Since on its top doth wet no plume derange
Of the smooth breast. I'll bathe there!" "Do not so!"
Warned me a voice from heaven. "A man let drop
His axe into that shallow rivulet—
As thou accountest—seventy years ago:
It fell and fell and still without a stop
Keeps falling, nor has reached the bottom yet."

NEVER THE TIME AND THE PLACE

NEVER the time and the place
And the loved one all together!
This path—how soft to pace!
This May—what magic weather!
Where is the loved one's face?
In a dream that loved one's face meets mine,
But the house is narrow, the place is bleak
Where, outside, rain and wind combine
With a furtive ear, if I strive to speak,
With a hostile eye at my flushing cheek,
With a malice that marks each word, each sign!
O enemy sly and serpentine,
Uncoil thee from the waking man!
Do I hold the Past
Thus firm and fast
Yet doubt if the Future hold I can?
This path so soft to pace shall lead
Thro' the magic of May to herself indeed!
Or narrow if needs the house must be,
Outside are the storms and strangers: we—
Oh, close, safe, warm sleep I and she,
—I and she!

PAMBO

Suppose that we part (work done, comes play)
With a grave tale told in crambo
—As our hearty sires were wont to say—
Whereof the hero is Pambo?

Do you happen to know who Pambo was?
Nor I—but this much have heard of him:
He entered one day a college-class,
And asked—was it so absurd of him?—

"May Pambo learn wisdom ere practise it?
In wisdom I fain would ground me:
Since wisdom is centred in Holy Writ,
Some psalm to the purpose expound me!"

"That psalm," the Professor smiled, "shall be
Untroubled by doubt which dirtieth
Pellucid streams when an ass like thee
Would drink there—the Nine-and-thirtieth.

"Verse first: *I said I will look to my ways*
That I with my tongue offend not.
How now? Why stare? Art struck in amaze?
Stop, stay! The smooth line hath an end knot!

"He 's gone!—disgusted my text should prove
Too easy to need explaining?
Had he waited, the blockhead might find I move
To matter that pays remaining!"

Long years went by, when—"Ha, who 's this?
Do I come on the restive scholar
I had driven to Wisdom's goal, I wis,
But that he slipped the collar?

"What? Arms crossed, brow bent, thought-immersed?
A student indeed! Why scruple
To own that the lesson proposed him first
Scarce suited so apt a pupil?

"Come back! From the beggarly elements
To a more recondite issue
We pass till we reach, at all events,
Some point that may puzzle . . . Why 'pish' you?"

From the ground looked piteous up the head:
"Daily and nightly, Master,
Your pupil plods thro' that text you read,
Yet gets on never the faster.

"At the self-same stand,—now old, then young!
I will look to my ways—were doing
As easy as saying!—*that I with my tongue*
Offend not—and 'scape pooh-poohing

"From sage and simple, doctor and dunce?
Ah, nowise! Still doubts so muddy
The stream I would drink at once,—but once!
That—thus I resume my study!"

Brother, brother, I share the blame,
Arcades sumus ambo!
Darkling, I keep my sunrise-aim,
Lack not the critic's flambeau,
And *look to my ways*, yet, much the same,
Offend with my tongue—like Pambo!

FERISHTAH'S FANCIES

"His genius was jocular, but, when disposed, he could be very serious."—Article "Shakespear," JEREMY COLLIER'S *Historical &c. Dictionary*, 2nd edition, 1701.

"You, Sir, I entertain you for one of my Hundred; only, I do not like the fashion of your garments: you will say they are Persian: but let them be changed."—*King Lear*, act iii. sc. 6.

FERISHTAH'S FANCIES

1884

PROLOGUE

Pray, Reader, have you eaten ortolans
Ever in Italy?
Recall how cooks there cook them: for my plan 's
To—Lyre with Spit ally.
They pluck the birds,—some dozen luscious lumps,
Or more or fewer,—
Then roast them, heads by heads and rumps by rumps,
Stuck on a skewer.
But first,—and here 's the point I fain would press,
—Don't think I 'm tattling!—
They interpose, to curb its lusciousness,
—What, 'twixt each fatling?
First comes plain bread, crisp, brown, a toasted square:
Then, a strong sage-leaf:
(So we find books with flowers dried here and there
Lest leaf engage leaf.)
First, food—then, piquancy—and last of all
Follows the thirdling:
Through wholesome hard, sharp soft, your tooth must bite
Ere reach the birdling.
Now, were there only crust to crunch, you 'd wince:
Unpalatable!

PROLOGUE

Sage-leaf is bitter-pungent—so 's a quince :
Eat each who 's able !
But through all three bite boldly—lo, the gust !
Flavour—no fixture—
Flies, permeating flesh and leaf and crust
In fine admixture.
So with your meal, my poem : masticate
Sense, sight and song there !
Digest these, and I praise your peptics' state,
Nothing found wrong there.
Whence springs my illustration who can tell ?
—The more surprising
That here eggs, milk, cheese, fruit suffice so well
For gormandizing.
A fancy-freak by contrast born of thee,
Delightful Gressoney !
Who laughest "Take what is, trust what may be!"
That 's Life's true lesson,—eh ?

Maison Delapierre,
Gressoney St. Jean, Val d'Aosta,
September 12, '83.

DERVISH—(though yet un-dervished, call him so
No less beforehand: while he drudged our way,
Other his worldly name was: when he wrote
Those versicles we Persians praise him for,
—True fairy-work—Ferishtah grew his style)—
Dervish Ferishtah walked the woods one eve,
And noted on a bough a raven's nest
Whereof each youngling gaped with callow beak
Widened by want; for why? beneath the tree
Dead lay the mother-bird. "A piteous chance!
"How shall they 'scape destruction?" sighed the
sage
—Or sage about to be, though simple still.
Responsive to which doubt, sudden there swooped
An eagle downward, and behold he bore
(Great-hearted) in his talons flesh wherewith
He stayed their craving, then resought the sky.
"Ah, foolish, faithless me!" the observer smiled,
"Who toil and moil to eke out life, when lo
Providence cares for every hungry mouth!"
To profit by which lesson, home went he,
And certain days sat musing,—neither meat
Nor drink would purchase by his handiwork.
Then,—for his head swam and his limbs grew
faint,—
Sleep overtook the unwise one, whom in dream
God thus admonished: "Hast thou marked my
deed?
Which part assigned by providence dost judge

Was meant for man's example? Should he play
The helpless weakling, or the helpful strength
That captures prey and saves the perishing?
Sluggard, arise: work, eat, then feed who lack!"

Waking, "I have arisen, work I will,
Eat, and so following. Which lacks food the more,
Body or soul in me? I starve in soul:
So may mankind: and since men congregate
In towns, not woods,—to Ispahan forthwith!"

Round us the wild creatures, overhead the trees,
Underfoot the moss-tracks,—life and love with these!
I to wear a fawn-skin, thou to dress in flowers:
All the long lone Summer-day, that greenwood life of ours!

Rich-pavilioned, rather,—still the world without,—
Inside—gold-roofed silk-walled silence round about!
Queen it thou on purple,—I, at watch and ward
Couched beneath the columns, gaze, thy slave, love's guard!

So, for us no world? Let throngs press thee to me!
Up and down amid men, heart by heart fare we!
Welcome squalid vesture, harsh voice, hateful face!
God is soul, souls I and thou: with souls should souls have place.

THE MELON-SELLER

GOING his rounds one day in Ispahan,—
Half-way on Dervishhood, not wholly there,—
Ferishtah, as he crossed a certain bridge,
Came startled on a well-remembered face.
"Can it be? What, turned melon-seller—thou?
Clad in such sordid garb, thy seat yon step
Where dogs brush by thee and express contempt?
Methinks, thy head-gear is some scooped-out gourd!
Nay, sunk to slicing up, for readier sale,
One fruit whereof the whole scarce feeds a swine?
Wast thou the Shah's Prime Minister, men saw
Ride on his right-hand while a trumpet blew
And Persia hailed the Favourite? Yea, twelve
years
Are past, I judge, since that transcendency,
And thou didst peculate and art abased:
No less, twelve years since, thou didst hold in hand
Persia, couldst halve and quarter, mince its pulp
As pleased thee, and distribute—melon-like—
Portions to whoso played the parasite,
Or suck—thyself—each juicy morsel. How
Enormous thy abjection,—hell from heaven,
Made tenfold hell by contrast! Whisper me!
Dost thou curse God for granting twelve years'
bliss
Only to prove this day 's the direr lot?"

Whereon the beggar raised a brow, once more
Luminous and imperial, from the rags.

FERISHTAH'S FANCIES

"Fool, does thy folly think my foolishness
Dwells rather on the fact that God appoints
A day of woe to the unworthy one,
Than that the unworthy one, by God's award,
Tasted joy twelve years long? Or buy a slice,
Or go to school!"
To school Ferishtah went;
And, schooling ended, passed from Ispahan
To Nishapur, that Elburz looks above
—Where they dig turquoise: there kept school himself,
The melon-seller's speech, his stock in trade.
Some say a certain Jew adduced the word
Out of their book, it sounds so much the same,
את־הטוב נקבל מאת האלהים
ואת־הרע לא נקבל: In Persian phrase,
"Shall we receive good at the hand of God
And evil not receive?" But great wits jump.

Wish no word unspoken, want no look away!
What if words were but mistake, and looks—too sudden, say!
Be unjust for once, Love! Bear it—well I may!

Do me justice always? Bid my heart—their shrine—
Render back its store of gifts, old looks and words of thine
—Oh, so all unjust—the less deserved, the more divine?

SHAH ABBAS

Anyhow, once full Dervish, youngsters came
To gather up his own words, 'neath a rock
Or else a palm, by pleasant Nishapur.

Said someone, as Ferishtah paused abrupt,
Reading a certain passage from the roll
Wherein is treated of Lord Ali's life:
"Master, explain this incongruity!
When I dared question 'It is beautiful,
But is it true?'—thy answer was 'In truth
Lives beauty.' I persisting—'Beauty—yes,
In thy mind and in my mind, every mind
That apprehends: but outside—so to speak—
Did beauty live in deed as well as word,
Was this life lived, was this death died—not dreamed?'
'Many attested it for fact' saidst thou.
'Many!' but mark, Sir! Half as long ago
As such things were,—supposing that they were,—
Reigned great Shah Abbas: he too lived and died
—How say they? Why, so strong of arm, of foot
So swift, he stayed a lion in his leap
On a stag's haunch,—with one hand grasped the stag,
With one struck down the lion: yet, no less,
Himself, that same day, feasting after sport,
Perceived a spider drop into his wine,
Let fall the flagon, died of simple fear.
So all say,—so dost thou say?"

"Wherefore not?"
Ferishtah smiled: "though strange, the story stands
Clear-chronicled: none tells it otherwise:
The fact's eye-witness bore the cup, beside."

"And dost thou credit one cup-bearer's tale,
False, very like, and futile certainly,
Yet hesitate to trust what many tongues
Combine to testify was beautiful
In deed as well as word? No fool's report
Of lion, stag and spider, but immense
With meaning for mankind,—thy race,—thyself?"

Whereto the Dervish: "First amend, my son,
Thy faulty nomenclature, call belief
Belief indeed, nor grace with such a name
The easy acquiescence of mankind
In matters nowise worth dispute, since life
Lasts merely the allotted moment. Lo—
That lion-stag-and-spider tale leaves fixed
The fact for us that somewhen Abbas reigned,
Died, somehow slain,—a useful registry,—
Which therefore we—'believe'? Stand forward, thou,
My Yakub, son of Yusuf, son of Zal!
I advertise thee that our liege, the Shah
Happily regnant, hath become assured,
By opportune discovery, that thy sires,
Son by the father upwards, track their line
To—whom but that same bearer of the cup
Whose inadvertency was chargeable
With what therefrom ensued, disgust and death
To Abbas Shah, the over-nice of soul?
Whence he appoints thee,—such his clemency,—
Not death, thy due, but just a double tax

To pay, on thy particular bed of reeds
Which flower into the brush that makes a broom
Fit to sweep ceilings clear of vermin. Sure,
Thou dost believe the story nor dispute
That punishment should signalize its truth?
Down therefore with some twelve dinars! Why
start,
—The stag's way with the lion hard on haunch?
'Believe the story?'—how thy words throng fast!—
'Who saw this, heard this, said this, wrote down
this,
That and the other circumstance to prove
So great a prodigy surprised the world?
Needs must thou prove me fable can be fact
Or ere thou coax one piece from out my pouch!'"

"There we agree, Sir: neither of us knows,
Neither accepts that tale on evidence
Worthy to warrant the large word—belief.
Now I get near thee! Why didst pause abrupt,
Disabled by emotion at a tale
Might match—be frank!—for credibility
The figment of the spider and the cup?
—To wit, thy roll 's concerning Ali's life,
Unevidenced—thine own word! Little boots
Our sympathy with fiction! When I read
The annals and consider of Tahmasp
And that sweet sun-surpassing star his love,
I weep like a cut vine-twig, though aware
Zurah's sad fate is fiction, since the snake
He saw devour her,—how could such exist,
Having nine heads? No snake boasts more than
three!
I weep, then laugh—both actions right alike.
But thou, Ferishtah, sapiency confessed,
When at the Day of Judgment God shall ask

'Didst thou believe?'—what wilt thou plead?
Thy tears?
(Nay, they fell fast and stain the parchment still)
What if thy tears meant love? Love lacking ground
—Belief,—avails thee as it would avail
My own pretence to favour since, forsooth,
I loved the lady—I, who needs must laugh
To hear a snake boasts nine heads: they have three!"

"Thanks for the well-timed help that 's born, behold,
Out of thy words, my son,—belief and love!
Hast heard of Ishak son of Absal? Ay,
The very same we heard of, ten years since,
Slain in the wars: he comes back safe and sound,—
Though twenty soldiers saw him die at Yezdt,—
Just as a single mule-and-baggage boy
Declared 't was like he some day would,—for why?
The twenty soldiers lied, he saw him stout,
Cured of all wounds at once by smear of salve,
A Mubid's manufacture: such the tale.
Now, when his pair of sons were thus apprised
Effect was twofold on them. 'Hail!' crowed This:
'Dearer the news than dayspring after night!
The cure-reporting youngster warrants me
Our father shall make glad our eyes once more,
For whom, had outpoured life of mine sufficed
To bring him back, free broached were every vein!'
'Avaunt, delusive tale-concocter, news
Cruel as meteor simulating dawn!'
Whimpered the other: 'Who believes this boy
Must disbelieve his twenty seniors: no,
Return our father shall not! Might my death
Purchase his life, how promptly would the dole

Be paid as due!' Well, ten years pass,—aha,
Ishak is marching homeward,—doubts, not he,
Are dead anddone with! So, our townsfolk straight
Must take on them to counsel. 'Go thou gay,
Welcome thy father, thou of ready faith!
Hide thee, contrariwise, thou faithless one,
Expect paternal frowning, blame and blows!'
So do our townsfolk counsel: dost demur?"

"Ferishtah like those simpletons—at loss
In what is plain as pikestaff? Pish! Suppose
The trustful son had sighed 'So much the worse!
Returning means—retaking heritage
Enjoyed these ten years, who should say me nay?'
How would such trust reward him? Trustlessness
—O' the other hand—were what procured most
praise
To him who judged return impossible,
Yet hated heritage procured thereby.
A fool were Ishak if he failed to prize
Mere head's work less than heart's work: no
fool he!'

"Is God less wise? Resume the roll!" They did.

You groped your way across my room i' the dear dark dead of
night;
At each fresh step a stumble was: but, once your lamp alight,
Easy and plain you walked again: so soon all wrong grew right!

What lay on floor to trip your foot? Each object, late awry,
Looked fitly placed, nor proved offence to footing free—for why?
The lamp showed all, discordant late, grown simple symmetry.

Be love your light and trust your guide, with these explore my
heart!
No obstacle to trip you then, strike hands and souls apart!
Since rooms and hearts are furnished so,—light shows you,—needs
love start?

THE FAMILY

A CERTAIN neighbour lying sick to death,
Ferishtah grieved beneath a palm-tree, whence
He rose at peace: whereat objected one
"Gudarz our friend gasps in extremity.
Sure, thou art ignorant how close at hand
Death presses, or the cloud, which fouled so late
Thy face, had deepened down not lightened off."

"I judge there will be respite, for I prayed."

"Sir, let me understand, of charity!
Yestereve, what was thine admonishment?
'All-wise, all-good, all-mighty—God is such!'
How then should man, the all-unworthy, dare
Propose to set aside a thing ordained?
To pray means—substitute man's will for God's:
Two best wills cannot be: by consequence,
What is man bound to but—assent, say I?
Rather to rapture of thanksgiving; since
That which seems worst to man to God is best,
So, because God ordains it, best to man.
Yet man—the foolish, weak and wicked—prays!
Urges 'My best were better, didst Thou know'!"

"List to a tale. A worthy householder
Of Shiraz had three sons, beside a spouse
Whom, cutting gourds, a serpent bit, whereon
The offended limb swelled black from foot to fork.
The husband called in aid a leech renowned

World-wide, confessed the lord of surgery,
And bade him dictate—who forthwith declared
'Sole remedy is amputation.' Straight
The husband sighed 'Thou knowest: be it so!'
His three sons heard their mother sentenced:
'Pause!'
Outbroke the elder: 'Be precipitate
Nowise, I pray thee! Take some gentler way,
Thou sage of much resource! I will not doubt
But science still may save foot, leg and thigh!'
The next in age snapped petulant: 'Too rash!
No reason for this maiming! What, Sir Leech,
Our parent limps henceforward while we leap?
Shame on thee! Save the limb thou must and shalt!'
'Shame on yourselves, ye bold ones!' followed up
The brisk third brother, youngest, pertest too:
'The leech knows all things, we are ignorant;
What he proposes, gratefully accept!
For me, had I some unguent bound to heal
Hurts in a twinkling, hardly would I dare
Essay its virtue and so cross the sage
By cure his skill pronounces folly. Quick!
No waiting longer! There the patient lies:
Out then with implements and operate!'"

"Ah, the young devil!"

"Why, his reason chimed
Right with the Hakim's."

"Hakim's, ay—but chit's?
How? what the skilled eye saw and judged of weight
To overbear a heavy consequence,
That—shall a sciolist affect to see?

All he saw—that is, all such oaf should see,
Was just the mother's suffering."

"In my tale,
Be God the Hakim : in the husband's case,
Call ready acquiescence—aptitude
Angelic, understanding swift and sure :
Call the first son—a wise humanity,
Slow to conceive but duteous to adopt :
See in the second son—humanity,
Wrong-headed yet right-hearted, rash but kind.
Last comes the cackler of the brood, our chit
Who, aping wisdom all beyond his years,
Thinks to discard humanity itself :
Fares like the beast which should affect to fly
Because a bird with wings may spurn the ground,
So, missing heaven and losing earth—drops how
But hell-ward ? No, be man and nothing more—
Man who, as man conceiving, hopes and fears,
And craves and deprecates, and loves, and loathes,
And bids God help him, till death touch his eyes
And show God granted most, denying all."

Man I am and man would be, Love—merest man and nothing more.
Bid me seem no other ! Eagles boast of pinions—let them soar !
I may put forth angel's plumage, once unmanned, but not before.

Now on earth, to stand suffices,—nay, if kneeling serves, to kneel :
Here you front me, here I find the all of heaven that earth can feel :
Sense looks straight,—not over, under,—perfect sees beyond appeal.

Good you are and wise, full circle : what to me were more outside ?
Wiser wisdom, better goodness ? Ah, such want the angel's wide
Sense to take and hold and keep them ! Mine at least has never tried.

THE SUN

"And what might that bold man's announcement be"—
Ferishtah questioned—"which so moved thine ire
That thou didst curse, nay, cuff and kick—in short,
Confute the announcer? Wipe those drops away
Which start afresh upon thy face at mere
Mention of such enormity: now, speak!"
"He scrupled not to say—(thou warrantest,
O patient Sir, that I unblamed repeat
Abominable words which blister tongue?)
God once assumed on earth a human shape:
(Lo, I have spitten!) Dared I ask the grace,
Fain would I hear, of thy subtility,
From out what hole in man's corrupted heart
Creeps such a maggot · fancies verminous
Breed in the clots there, but a monster born
Of pride and folly like this pest—thyself
Only canst trace to egg-shell it hath chipped."

The sun rode high. "During our ignorance"—
Began Ferishtah—"folk esteemed as God
Yon orb: for argument, suppose him so,—
Be it the symbol, not the symbolized,
I and thou safelier take upon our lips.
Accordingly, yon orb that we adore
—What is he? Author of all light and life:
Such one must needs be somewhere: this is he.
Like what? If I may trust my human eyes,

A ball composed of spirit-fire, whence springs
—What, from this ball, my arms could circle round?
All I enjoy on earth. By consequence,
Inspiring me with—what? Why, love and praise.
I eat a palatable fig—there 's love
In little: who first planted what I pluck,
Obtains my little praise, too: more of both
Keeps due proportion with more cause for each:
So, more and ever more, till most of all
Completes experience, and the orb, descried
Ultimate giver of all good, perforce
Gathers unto himself all love, all praise,
Is worshipped—which means loved and praised at height.
Back to the first good: 't was the gardener gave
Occasion to my palate's pleasure: grace,
Plain on his part, demanded thanks on mine.
Go up above this giver,—step by step,
Gain a conception of what—(how and why,
Matters not now)—occasioned him to give,
Appointed him the gardener of the ground,—
I mount by just progression slow and sure
To some prime giver—here assumed yon orb—
Who takes my worship. Whom have I in mind,
Thus worshipping, unless a man, my like
Howe'er above me? Man, I say—how else,
I being man who worship? Here 's my hand
Lifts first a mustard-seed, then weight on weight
Greater and ever greater, till at last
It lifts a melon, I suppose, then stops—
Hand-strength expended wholly: so, my love
First lauds the gardener for the fig his gift,
Then, looking higher, loves and lauds still more,
Who hires the ground, who owns the ground,
Sheikh, Shah,
On and away, away and ever on,

Till, at the last, it loves and lauds the orb
Ultimate cause of all to laud and love.
Where is the break, the change of quality
In hand's power, soul's impulsion? Gift was grace,
The greatest as the smallest. Had I stopped
Anywhere in the scale, stayed love and praise
As so far only fit to follow gift,
Saying 'I thanked the gardener for his fig,
But now that, lo, the Shah has filled my purse
With tomans which avail to purchase me
A fig-tree forest, shall I pay the same
With love and praise, the gardener's proper fee?'
Justly would whoso bears a brain object
'Giving is giving, gift claims gift's return,
Do thou thine own part, therefore: let the Shah
Ask more from who has more to pay.' Perchance
He gave me from his treasure less by much
Than the soil's servant: let that be! My part
Is plain—to meet and match the gift and gift
With love and love, with praise and praise, till both
Cry 'All of us is thine, we can no more!'
So shall I do man's utmost—man to man:
For as our liege the Shah's sublime estate
Merely enhaloes, leaves him man the same,
So must I count that orb I call a fire
(Keep to the language of our ignorance)
Something that 's fire and more beside. Mere fire
—Is it a force which, giving, knows it gives,
And wherefore, so may look for love and praise
From me, fire's like so far, however less
In all beside? Prime cause this fire shall be,
Uncaused, all-causing: hence begin the gifts,
Thither must go my love and praise—to what?
Fire? Symbol fitly serves the symbolized
Herein,—that this same object of my thanks,
While to my mind nowise conceivable

Except as mind no less than fire, refutes
Next moment mind's conception : fire is fire—
While what I needs must thank, must needs include
Purpose with power,—humanity like mine,
Imagined, for the dear necessity,
One moment in an object which the next
Confesses unimaginable. Power!
—What need of will, then? nought opposes power:
Why, purpose? any change must be for worse:
And what occasion for beneficence
When all that is, so is and so must be?
Best being best now, change were for the worse.
Accordingly discard these qualities
Proper to imperfection, take for type
Mere fire, eject the man, retain the orb,—
The perfect and, so, inconceivable,—
And what remains to love and praise? A stone
Fair-coloured proves a solace to my eye,
Rolled by my tongue brings moisture curing drouth,
And struck by steel emits a useful spark:
Shall I return it thanks, the insentient thing?
No,—man once, man for ever—man in soul
As man in body: just as this can use
Its proper senses only, see and hear,
Taste, like or loathe according to its law
And not another creature's,—even so
Man's soul is moved by what, if it in turn
Must move, is kindred soul: receiving good
—Man's way—must make man's due acknowledgment,
No other, even while he reasons out
Plainly enough that, were the man unmanned,
Made angel of, angelic every way,
The love and praise that rightly seek and find
Their man-like object now,—instructed more,
Would go forth idly, air to emptiness.

Our human flower, sun-ripened, proffers scent
Though reason prove the sun lacks nose to feed
On what himself made grateful : flower and man,
Let each assume that scent and love alike
Being once born, must needs have use! Man's part
Is plain—to send love forth,—astray, perhaps :
No matter, he has done his part."

"Wherefrom
What is to follow—if I take thy sense—
But that the sun—the inconceivable
Confessed by man—comprises, all the same,
Man's every-day conception of himself—
No less remaining unconceived ! "

"Agreed" !

"Yet thou, insisting on the right of man
To feel as man, not otherwise,—man, bound
By man's conditions neither less nor more,
Obliged to estimate as fair or foul,
Right, wrong, good, evil, what man's faculty
Adjudges such,—how canst thou,—plainly bound
To take man's truth for truth and only truth,—
Dare to accept, in just one case, as truth
Falsehood confessed ? Flesh simulating fire—
Our fellow-man whom we his fellows know
For dust—instinct with fire unknowable !
Where 's thy man-needed truth—its proof, nay print
Of faintest passage on the tablets traced
By man, termed knowledge ? 'T is conceded thee,
We lack such fancied union—fire with flesh :
But even so, to lack is not to gain
Our lack's suppliance : where 's the trace of such
Recorded ?"

"What if such a tracing were?
If some strange story stood,—whate'er its worth,—
That the immensely yearned-for, once befell,
—The sun was flesh once?—(keep the figure!)"

"How?
An union inconceivable was fact?"

"Son, if the stranger have convinced himself
Fancy is fact—the sun, besides a fire,
Holds earthly substance somehow fire pervades
And yet consumes not,—earth, he understands,
With essence he remains a stranger to,—
Fitlier thou saidst 'I stand appalled before
Conception unattainable by me
Who need it most'—than this—'What? boast he holds
Conviction where I see conviction's need,
Alas,—and nothing else? then what remains
But that I straightway curse, cuff, kick the fool!'"

Fire is in the flint: true, once a spark escapes,
Fire forgets the kinship, soars till fancy shapes
Some befitting cradle where the babe had birth—
Wholly heaven's the product, unallied to earth.
Splendours recognized as perfect in the star!—
In our flint their home was, housed as now they are.

MIHRAB SHAH

Quoth an inquirer, "Praise the Merciful!
My thumb which yesterday a scorpion nipped—
(It swelled and blackened)—lo, is sound again!
By application of a virtuous root
The burning has abated: that is well:
But now methinks I have a mind to ask,—
Since this discomfort came of culling herbs
Nor meaning harm,—why needs a scorpion be?
Yea, there began, from when my thumb last throbbed,
Advance in question framing, till I asked
Wherefore should any evil hap to man—
From ache of flesh to agony of soul—
Since God's All-mercy mates All-potency?
Nay, why permits He evil to Himself—
Man's sin, accounted such? Suppose a world
Purged of all pain, with fit inhabitant—
Man pure of evil in thought, word and deed—
Were it not well? Then, wherefore otherwise?
Too good result? But He is wholly good!
Hard to effect? Ay, were He impotent!
Teach me, Ferishtah!"

Said the Dervish: "Friend,
My chance, escaped to-day, was worse than thine:
I, as I woke this morning, raised my head,
Which never tumbled but stuck fast on neck.
Was not I glad and thankful!"

"How could head
Tumble from neck, unchopped—inform me first!
Unless we take Firdausi's tale for truth,
Who ever heard the like?"

"The like might hap
By natural law: I let my staff fall thus—
It goes to ground, I know not why. Suppose,
Whene'er my hold was loosed, it skyward sprang
As certainly, and all experience proved
That, just as staves when unsupported sink,
So, unconfined, they soar?"

"Let such be law—
Why, a new chapter of sad accidents
Were added to humanity's mischance,
No doubt at all, and as a man's false step
Now lays him prone on earth, contrariwise,
Removal from his shoulder of a weight
Might start him upwards to perdition. Ay!
But, since such law exists in just thy brain,
I shall not hesitate to doff my cap
For fear my head take flight."

"Nor feel relief
Finding it firm on shoulder. Tell me, now!
What were the bond 'twixt man and man, dost judge,
Pain once abolished? Come, be true! Our Shah—
How stands he in thy favour? Why that shrug?
Is not he lord and ruler?"

"Easily!
His mother bore him, first of those four wives
Provided by his father, such his luck:
Since when his business simply was to breathe
And take each day's new bounty. There he stands—

Where else had I stood, were his birth-star mine?
No, to respect men's power, I needs must see
Men's bare hands seek, find, grasp and wield the
sword
Nobody else can brandish! Bless his heart,
'T is said, he scarcely counts his fingers right!"

"Well, then—his princely doles! from every feast
Off go the feasted with the dish they ate
And cup they drank from,—nay, a change besides
Of garments" . . .

"Sir, put case, for service done,—
Or best, for love's sake,—such and such a slave
Sold his allowance of sour lentil soup
To therewith purchase me a pipe-stick,—nay,
If he, by but one hour, cut short his sleep
To clout my shoe,—that were a sacrifice!"

"All praise his gracious bearing."

"All praise mine—
Or would praise did they never make approach
Except on all-fours, crawling till I bade
'Now that with eyelids thou hast touched the earth,
Come close and have no fear, poor nothingness!'
What wonder that the lady-rose I woo
And palisade about from every wind,
Holds herself handsomely? The wilding, now,
Ruffled outside at pleasure of the blast,
That still lifts up with something of a smile
Its poor attempt at bloom" . . .

"A blameless life,
Where wrong might revel with impunity—
Remember that!"

"The falcon on his fist—
Reclaimed and trained and belled and beautified
Till she believes herself the Simorgh's match—
She only deigns destroy the antelope,
Stoops at no carrion-crow : thou marvellest?"

"So be it, then! He wakes no love in thee
For any one of divers attributes
Commonly deemed loveworthy. All the same,
I would he were not wasting, slow but sure,
With that internal ulcer" . . .

"Say'st thou so?
How should I guess? Alack, poor soul! But stay—
Sure in the reach of art some remedy
Must lie to hand : or if it lurk,—that leech
Of fame in Tebriz, why not seek his aid?
Couldst not thou, Dervish, counsel in the case?"

"My counsel might be—what imports a pang
The more or less, which puts an end to one
Odious in spite of every attribute
Commonly deemed loveworthy?"

"Attributes?
Faugh!—nay, Ferishtah,—'t is an ulcer, think!
Attributes, quotha? Here 's poor flesh and blood,
Like thine and mine and every man's, a prey
To hell-fire! Hast thou lost thy wits for once?"

"Friend, here they are to find and profit by!
Put pain from out the world, what room were left
For thanks to God, for love to Man? Why thanks,—
Except for some escape, whate'er the style,

From pain that might be, name it as thou mayst?
Why love,—when all thy kind, save me, suppose,
Thy father, and thy son, and . . . well, thy dog,
To eke the decent number out—we few
Who happen—like a handful of chance stars
From the unnumbered host—to shine o'erhead
And lend thee light,—our twinkle all thy store,—
We only take thy love! Mankind, forsooth?
Who sympathizes with their general joy
Foolish as undeserved? But pain—see God's
Wisdom at work!—man's heart is made to judge
Pain deserved nowhere by the common flesh
Our birthright,—bad and good deserve alike
No pain, to human apprehension! Lust,
Greed, cruelty, injustice, crave (we hold)
Due punishment from somebody, no doubt:
But ulcer in the midriff! that brings flesh
Triumphant from the bar whereto arraigned
Soul quakes with reason. In the eye of God
Pain may have purpose and be justified:
Man's sense avails to only see, in pain,
A hateful chance no man but would avert
Or, failing, needs must pity. Thanks to God
And love to man,—from man take these away,
And what is man worth? Therefore, Mihrab Shah,
Tax me my bread and salt twice over, claim
Laila my daughter for thy sport,—go on!
Slay my son's self, maintain thy poetry
Beats mine,—thou meritest a dozen deaths!
But—ulcer in the stomach,—ah, poor soul,
Try a fig-plaster: may it ease thy pangs!"

So, the head aches and the limbs are faint!
Flesh is a burthen—even to you!
Can I force a smile with a fancy quaint?
Why are my ailments none or few?

FERISHTAH'S FANCIES

In the soul of me sits sluggishness:
  Body so strong and will so weak!
The slave stands fit for the labour—yes,
  But the master's mandate is still to seek.

You, now—what if the outside clay
  Helped, not hindered the inside flame?
My dim to-morrow—your plain to-day,
  Yours the achievement, mine the aim?

So were it rightly, so shall it be!
  Only, while earth we pace together
For the purpose apportioned you and me,
  Closer we tread for a common tether.

You shall sigh "Wait for his sluggish soul!
  Shame he should lag, not lamed as I!"
May not I smile "Ungained her goal:
  Body may reach her—by-and-by?"

"How of his fate, the Pilgrims' soldier-guide
Condemned" (Ferishtah questioned), "for he slew
The merchant whom he convoyed with his bales
—A special treachery?"

"Sir, the proofs were plain:
Justice was satisfied: between two boards
The rogue was sawn asunder, rightly served."

"With all wise men's approval—mine at least."

"Himself, indeed, confessed as much. 'I die
Justly' (groaned he) 'through over-greediness
Which tempted me to rob: but grieve the most
That he who quickened sin at slumber,—ay,
Prompted and pestered me till thought grew deed,—
The same is fled to Syria and is safe,
Laughing at me thus left to pay for both.
My comfort is that God reserves for him
Hell's hottest' . . ."

"Idle words."

"Enlighten me!
Wherefore so idle? Punishment by man
Has thy assent,—the word is on thy lips.
By parity of reason, punishment
By God should likelier win thy thanks and praise."

"Man acts as man must: God, as God beseems.
A camel-driver, when his beast will bite,
Thumps her athwart the muzzle: why?"

"How else
Instruct the creature—mouths should munch, not bite?"

"True, he is man, knows but man's trick to teach.
Suppose some plain word, told her first of all,
Had hindered any biting?"

"Find him such,
And fit the beast with understanding first!
No understanding animals like Rakhsh
Nowadays, Master! Till they breed on earth,
For teaching—blows must serve."

"Who deals the blow—
What if by some rare method,—magic, say,—
He saw into the biter's very soul,
And knew the fault was so repented of
It could not happen twice?"

"That 's something: still,
I hear, methinks, the driver say 'No less
Take thy fault's due! Those long-necked sisters, see,
Lean all a-stretch to know if biting meets
Punishment or enjoys impunity.
For their sakes—thwack!'"

"The journey home at end,
The solitary beast safe-stabled now,
In comes the driver to avenge a wrong
Suffered from six months since,—apparently

With patience, nay, approval: when the jaws
Met i' the small of the arm, 'Ha, Ladykin,
Still at thy frolics, girl of gold?' laughed he:
'Eat flesh? Rye-grass content thee rather with,
Whereof accept a bundle!' Now,—what change!
Laughter by no means! Now 't is 'Fiend, thy frisk
Was fit to find thee provender, didst judge?
Behold this red-hot twy-prong, thus I stick
To hiss i' the soft of thee!'"

"Behold? behold
A crazy noddle, rather! Sure the brute
Might wellnigh have plain speech coaxed out of tongue,
And grow as voluble as Rakhsh himself
At such mad outrage. 'Could I take thy mind,
Guess thy desire? If biting was offence
Wherefore the rye-grass bundle, why each day's
Patting and petting, but to intimate
My playsomeness had pleased thee? Thou endowed
With reason, truly!'"

"Reason aims to raise
Some makeshift scaffold-vantage midway, whence
Man dares, for life's brief moment, peer below:
But ape omniscience? Nay! The ladder lent
To climb by, step and step, until we reach
The little foothold-rise allowed mankind
To mount on and thence guess the sun's survey—
Shall this avail to show us world-wide truth
Stretched for the sun's descrying? Reason bids
'Teach, Man, thy beast his duty first of all
Or last of all, with blows if blows must be,—
How else accomplish teaching?' Reason adds

'Before man's First, and after man's poor Last,
God operated and will operate.'
—Process of which man merely knows this much,—
That nowise it resembles man's at all,
Teaching or punishing."

"It follows, then,
That any malefactor I would smite
With God's allowance, God himself will spare
Presumably. No scapegrace? Then, rejoice
Thou snatch-grace safe in Syria!"

"Friend, such view
Is but man's wonderful and wide mistake.
Man lumps his kind i'the mass: God singles thence
Unit by unit. Thou and God exist—
So think!—for certain: think the mass—mankind—
Disparts, disperses, leaves thyself alone!
Ask thy lone soul what laws are plain to thee,—
Thee and no other,—stand or fall by them!
That is the part for thee: regard all else
For what it may be—Time's illusion. This
Be sure of—ignorance that sins, is safe.
No punishment like knowledge! Instance, now!
My father's choicest treasure was a book
Wherein he, day by day and year by year,
Recorded gains of wisdom for my sake
When I should grow to manhood. While a child,
Coming upon the casket where it lay
Unguarded,—what did I but toss the thing
Into a fire to make more flame therewith,
Meaning no harm? So acts man three-years old!
I grieve now at my loss by witlessness,
But guilt was none to punish. Man mature—
Each word of his I lightly held, each look

I turned from—wish that wished in vain—nay, will
That willed and yet went all to waste—'t is these
Rankle like fire. Forgiveness? rather grant
Forgetfulness! The past is past and lost.
However near I stand in his regard,
So much the nearer had I stood by steps
Offered the feet which rashly spurned their help.
That I call Hell; why further punishment?"

When I vexed you and you chid me,
  And I owned my fault and turned
My cheek the way you bid me,
  And confessed the blow well earned,—

My comfort all the while was
  —Fault was faulty—near, not quite!
Do you wonder why the smile was?
  O'erpunished wrong grew right.

But faults you ne'er suspected,
  Nay, praised, no faults at all,—
Those would you had detected—
  Crushed eggs whence snakes could crawl!

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TWO CAMELS

Quoth one: "Sir, solve a scruple! No true sage
I hear of, but instructs his scholar thus:
'Wouldst thou be wise? Then mortify thyself!
Baulk of its craving every bestial sense!
Say "If I relish melons—so do swine!
Horse, ass and mule consume their provender
Nor leave a pea-pod: fasting feeds the soul."'
Thus they admonish: while thyself, I note,
Eatest thy ration with an appetite,
Nor fallest foul of whoso licks his lips
And sighs—'Well-saffroned was that barleysoup!'
Can wisdom co-exist with—gorge-and-swill,
I say not,—simply sensual preference
For this or that fantastic meat and drink?
Moreover, wind blows sharper than its wont
This morning, and thou hast already donned
Thy sheepskin over-garment: sure the sage
Is busied with conceits that soar above
A petty change of season and its chance
Of causing ordinary flesh to sneeze?
I always thought, Sir" . . .

"Son," Ferishtah said,
"Truth ought to seem as never thought before.
How if I give it birth in parable?
A neighbour owns two camels, beasts of price
And promise, destined each to go, next week,
Swiftly and surely with his merchandise
From Nishapur to Sebzevar, no truce

TWO CAMELS

To tramp, but travel, spite of sands and drouth,
In days so many, lest they miss the Fair.
Each falls to meditation o'er his crib
Piled high with provender before the start.
Quoth this: 'My soul is set on winning praise
From goodman lord and master,—hump to hoof,
I dedicate me to his service. How?
Grass, purslane, lupines and I know not what,
Crammed in my manger? Ha, I see—I see!
No, master, spare thy money! I shall trudge
The distance and yet cost thee not a doit
Beyond my supper on this mouldy bran.'
'Be magnified, O master, for the meal
So opportunely liberal!' quoth that.
'What use of strength in me but to surmount
Sands and simooms, and bend beneath thy bales
No knee until I reach the glad bazaar?
Thus I do justice to thy fare: no sprig
Of toothsome chervil must I leave unchewed!
Too bitterly should I reproach myself
Did I sink down in sight of Sebzevar,
Remembering how the merest mouthful more
Had heartened me to manage yet a mile!'
And so it proved: the too-abstemious brute
Midway broke down, his pack rejoiced the thieves,
His carcass fed the vultures: not so he
The wisely thankful, who, good market-drudge,
Let down his lading in the market-place,
No damage to a single pack. Which beast,
Think ye, had praise and patting and a brand
Of good-and-faithful-servant fixed on flank?
So, with thy squeamish scruple. What imports
Fasting or feasting? Do thy day's work, dare
Refuse no help thereto, since help refused
Is hindrance sought and found. Win but the
race—

Who shall object 'He tossed three wine cups off,
And, just at starting, Lilith kissed his lips'?

"More soberly,—consider this, my Son!
Put case I never have myself enjoyed,
Known by experience what enjoyment means,
How shall I—share enjoyment?—no, indeed!—
Supply it to my fellows,—ignorant,
As so I should be of the thing they crave,
How it affects them, works for good or ill.
Style my enjoyment self-indulgence—sin—
Why should I labour to infect my kind
With sin's occasion, bid them too enjoy,
Who else might neither catch nor give again
Joy's plague, but live in righteous misery?
Just as I cannot, till myself convinced,
Impart conviction, so, to deal forth joy
Adroitly, needs must I know joy myself.
Renounce joy for my fellows' sake? That 's joy
Beyond joy; but renounced for mine, not theirs?
Why, the physician called to help the sick,
Cries 'Let me, first of all, discard my health!'
No, Son: the richness hearted in such joy
Is in the knowing what are gifts we give,
Not in a vain endeavour not to know!
Therefore, desire joy and thank God for it!
The Adversary said,—a Jew reports,—
החנם ירא איוב אלהים:
In Persian phrase, 'Does Job fear God for nought?'
Job's creatureship is not abjured, thou fool!
He nowise isolates himself and plays
The independent equal, owns no more
Than himself gave himself, so why thank God?
A proper speech were this מאלהים
'Equals we are, Job, labour for thyself,
Nor bid me help thee: bear, as best flesh may,

TWO CAMELS

Pains I inflict not nor avail to cure:
Beg of me nothing thou thyself mayst win
By work, or waive with magnanimity,
Since we are peers acknowledged,—scarcely peers,
Had I implanted any want of thine
Only my power could meet and gratify.'
No: rather hear, at man's indifference—
'Wherefore did I contrive for thee that ear
Hungry for music, and direct thine eye
To where I hold a seven-stringed instrument,
Unless I meant thee to beseech me play?'"

Once I saw a chemist take a pinch of powder
—Simple dust it seemed—and half-unstop a phial:
—Outdropped harmless dew. "Mixed nothings make"—quoth
he—
"Something!" So they did: a thunderclap, but louder—
Lightning-flash, but fiercer—put spectators' nerves to trial:
Sure enough, we learned what was, imagined what might be.

Had I no experience how a lip's mere tremble,
Look's half hesitation, cheek's just change of colour,
These effect a heartquake,—how should I conceive
What a heaven there may be? Let it but resemble
Earth myself have known! No bliss that 's finer, fuller,
Only—bliss that lasts, they say, and fain would I believe.

CHERRIES

"What, I disturb thee at thy morning-meal:
Cherries so ripe already? Eat apace!
I recollect thy lesson yesterday.
Yet—thanks, Sir, for thy leave to interrupt" . . .

"Friend, I have finished my repast, thank God!"

"There now, thy thanks for breaking fast on fruit!—
Thanks being praise, or tantamount thereto.
Prithee consider, have not things degree,
Lofty and low? Are things not great and small,
Thence claiming praise and wonder more or less?
Shall we confuse them, with thy warrant too,
Whose doctrine otherwise begins and ends
With just this precept 'Never faith enough
In man as weakness, God as potency'?
When I would pay soul's tribute to that same,
Why not look up in wonder, bid the stars
Attest my praise of the All-mighty One?
What are man's puny members and as mean
Requirements weighed with Star-King Mushtari?
There is the marvel!"

"Not to man—that 's me.
List to what happened late, in fact or dream.
A certain stranger, bound from far away,
Still the Shah's subject, found himself before
Ispahan palace-gate. As duty bade,
He enters in the courts, will, if he may,

See so much glory as befits a slave
Who only comes, of mind to testify
How great and good is shown our lord the Shah.
In he walks, round he casts his eye about,
Looks up and down, admires to heart's content,
Ascends the gallery, tries door and door,
None says his reverence nay : peeps in at each,
Wonders at all the unimagined use,
Gold here and jewels there,—so vast, that hall—
So perfect yon pavilion !—lamps above
Bidding look up from luxuries below,—
Evermore wonder topping wonder,—last—
Sudden he comes upon a cosy nook,
A nest-like little chamber, with his name,
His own, yea, his and no mistake at all,
Plain o'er the entry : what, and he descries
Just those arrangements inside,—oh, the care !—
Suited to soul and body both,—so snug
The cushion—nay, the pipe-stand furnished so !
Whereathecriesaloud,—whatthink'stthou,Friend?
'That these my slippers should be just my choice,
Even to the colour that I most affect,
Is nothing : ah, that lamp, the central sun,
What must it light within its minaret
I scarce dare guess the good of! Who lives there?
That let me wonder at,—no slipper-toys
Meant for the foot, forsooth, which kicks them—
thus !'

"Never enough faith in omnipotence,—
Never too much, by parity, of faith
In impuissance, man's—which turns to strength
When once acknowledged weakness every way.
How? Hear the teaching of another tale.

"Two men once owed the Shah a mighty sum,

Beggars they both were: this one crossed his arms
And bowed his head,—'whereof,'—sighed he,—
'each hair
Proved it a jewel, how the host's amount
Were idly strewn for payment at thy feet!'
'Lord, here they lie, my havings poor and scant!
All of the berries on my currant-bush,
What roots of garlic have escaped the mice,
And some five pippins from the seedling tree,—
Would they were half-a-dozen! anyhow,
Accept my all, poor beggar that I am!'
'Received in full of all demands!' smiled back
The apportioner of every lot of ground
From inch to acre. Littleness of love
Befits the littleness of loving thing.
What if he boasted 'Seeing I am great,
Great must my corresponding tribute be?'
Mushtari,—well, suppose him seven times seven
The sun's superior, proved so by some sage:
Am I that sage? To me his twinkle blue
Is all I know of him and thank him for,
And therefore I have put the same in verse—
'Like yon blue twinkle, twinks thine eye, my Love!'

"Neither shalt thou be troubled overmuch
Because thy offering,—littleness itself,—
Is lessened by admixture sad and strange
Of mere man's-motives,—praise with fear, and love
With looking after that same love's reward.
Alas, Friend, what was free from this alloy,—
Some smatch thereof,—in best and purest love
Proffered thy earthly father? Dust thou art,
Dust shalt be to the end. Thy father took
The dust, and kindly called the handful—gold,
Nor cared to count what sparkled here and there,
Sagely unanalytic. Thank, praise, love

CHERRIES

(Sum up thus) for the lowest favours first,
The commonest of comforts! aught beside
Very omnipotence had overlooked
Such needs, arranging for thy little life.
Nor waste thy power of love in wonderment
At what thou wiselier lettest shine unsoiled
By breath of word. That this last cherry soothes
A roughness of my palate, that I know:
His Maker knows why Mushtari was made."

Verse-making was least of my virtues: I viewed with despair
Wealth that never yet was but might be—all that verse-making were
If the life would but lengthen to wish, let the mind be laid bare.
So I said "To do little is bad, to do nothing is worse"—
And made verse.

Love-making,—how simple a matter! No depths to explore,
No heights in a life to ascend! No disheartening Before,
No affrighting Hereafter,—love now will be love evermore.
So I felt "To keep silence were folly:"—all language above,
I made love.

"Ay, but, Ferishtah,"—a disciple smirked,—
"That verse of thine 'How twinks thine eye, my
Love,
Blue as yon star-beam!' much arrides myself
Who haply may obtain a kiss therewith
This eve from Laila where the palms abound—
My youth, my warrant—so the palms be close!
Suppose when thou art earnest in discourse
Concerning high and holy things,—abrupt
I out with—'Laila's lip, how honey-sweet!'—
What say'st thou, were it scandalous or no?
I feel thy shoe sent flying at my mouth
For daring—prodigy of impudence—
Publish what, secret, were permissible.
Well,—one slide further in the imagined slough,—
Knee-deep therein, (respect thy reverence!)—
Suppose me well aware thy very self
Stooped prying through the palm-screen, while I
dared
Solace me with caressings all the same?
Unutterable, nay—unthinkable,
Undreamable a deed of shame! Alack,
How will it fare shouldst thou impress on me
That certainly an Eye is over all
And each, to mark the minute's deed, word, thought,
As worthy of reward or punishment?
Shall I permit my sense an Eye-viewed shame,
Broad daylight perpetration,—so to speak,—
I had not dared to breathe within the Ear,

PLOT-CULTURE

With black night's help about me? Yet I stand
A man, no monster, made of flesh not cloud:
Why made so, if my making prove offence
To Maker's eye and ear?"

"Thou wouldst not stand
Distinctly Man,"—Ferishtah made reply,
"Not the mere creature,—did no limit-line
Round thee about, apportion thee thy place
Clean-cut from out and off the illimitable,—
Minuteness severed from immensity.
All of thee for the Maker,—for thyself,
Workings inside the circle that evolve
Thine all,—the product of thy cultured plot.
So much of grain the ground's lord bids thee yield:
Bring sacks to granary in Autumn! spare
Daily intelligence of this manure,
That compost, how they tend to feed the soil:
There thou art master sole and absolute
—Only, remember doomsday! Twitt'st thou me
Because I turn away my outraged nose
Shouldst thou obtrude thereon a shovelful
Of fertilizing kisses? Since thy sire
Wills and obtains thy marriage with the maid,
Enough! Be reticent, I counsel thee,
Nor venture to acquaint him, point by point,
What he procures thee. Is he so obtuse?
Keep thy instruction to thyself! My ass—
Only from him expect acknowledgment
The while he champs my gift, a thistle-bunch,
How much he loves the largess: of his love
I only tolerate so much as tells
By wrinkling nose and inarticulate grunt,
The meal, that heartens him to do my work,
Tickles his palate as I meant it should."

FERISHTAH'S FANCIES

Not with my Soul, Love!—bid no Soul like mine
  Lap thee around nor leave the poor Sense room!
Soul,—travel-worn, toil-weary,—would confine
  Along with Soul, Soul's gains from glow and gloom,
Captures from soarings high and divings deep.
Spoil-laden Soul, how should such memories sleep?
Take Sense, too—let me love entire and whole—
    Not with my Soul!

Eyes shall meet eyes and find no eyes between,
  Lips feed on lips, no other lips to fear!
No past, no future—so thine arms but screen
  The present from surprise! not there, 't is here—
Not then, 't is now:—back, memories that intrude!
Make, Love, the universe our solitude,
And, over all the rest, oblivion roll—
    Sense quenching Soul!

A PILLAR AT SEBZEVAR

"KNOWLEDGE deposed, then!"—groaned whom
that most grieved
As foolishest of all the company.
"What, knowledge, man's distinctive attribute,
He doffs that crown to emulate an ass
Because the unknowing long-ears loves at least
Husked lupines, and belike the feeder's self
—Whose purpose in the dole what ass divines?"
"Friend," quoth Ferishtah, "all I seem to know
Is—I know nothing save that love I can
Boundlessly, endlessly. My curls were crowned
In youth with knowledge,—off, alas, crown slipped
Next moment, pushed by better knowledge still
Which nowise proved more constant: gain, to-day,
Was toppling loss to-morrow, lay at last
—Knowledge, the golden?—lacquered ignorance!
As gain—mistrust it! Not as means to gain:
Lacquer we learn by: cast in fining-pot,
We learn,—when what seemed ore assayed proves
dross,—
Surelier true gold's worth, guess how purity
I' the lode were precious could one light on ore
Clarified up to test of crucible.
The prize is in the process: knowledge means
Ever-renewed assurance by defeat
That victory is somehow still to reach,
But love is victory, the prize itself:
Love—trust to! Be rewarded for the trust

In trust's mere act. In love success is sure,
Attainment—no delusion, whatsoe'er
The prize be: apprehended as a prize,
A prize it is. Thy child as surely grasps
An orange as he fails to grasp the sun
Assumed his capture. What if soon he finds
The foolish fruit unworthy grasping? Joy
In shape and colour,—that was joy as true—
Worthy in its degree of love—as grasp
Of sun were, which had singed his hand beside.
What if he said the orange held no juice
Since it was not that sun he hoped to suck?
This constitutes the curse that spoils our life
And sets man maundering of his misery,
That there 's no meanest atom he obtains
Of what he counts for knowledge but he cries
'Hold here,—I have the whole thing,—know, this
time,
Nor need search farther!' Whereas, strew his path
With pleasures, and he scorns them while he stoops:
'This fitly call'st thou pleasure, pick up this
And praise it, truly? I reserve my thanks
For something more substantial.' Fool not thus
In practising with life and its delights!
Enjoy the present gift, nor wait to know
The unknowable. Enough to say 'I feel
Love's sure effect, and, being loved, must love
The love its cause behind,—I can and do!'
Nor turn to try thy brain-power on the fact,
(Apart from as it strikes thee, here and now—
Its how and why, i' the future and elsewhere)
Except to—yet once more, and ever again,
Confirm thee in thy utter ignorance:
Assured that, whatsoe'er the quality
Of love's cause, save that love was caused thereby,
This—nigh upon revealment as it seemed

A PILLAR AT SEBZEVAR

A minute since—defies thy longing looks,
Withdrawn into the unknowable once more.
Wholly distrust thy knowledge, then, and trust
As wholly love allied to ignorance!
There lies thy truth and safety. Love is praise,
And praise is love! Refine the same, contrive
An intellectual tribute—ignorance
Appreciating ere approbative
Of knowledge that is infinite? With us
The small, who use the knowledge of our kind
Greater than we, more wisely ignorance
Restricts its apprehension, sees and knows
No more than brain accepts in faith of sight,
Takes first what comes first, only sure so far.
By Sebzevar a certain pillar stands
So aptly that its gnomon tells the hour;
What if the townsmen said 'Before we thank
Who placed it, for his serviceable craft,
And go to dinner since its shade tells noon,
Needs must we have the craftsman's purpose clear
On half a hundred more recondite points
Than a mere summons to a vulgar meal''
Better they say 'How opportune the help!
Be loved and praised, thou kindly-hearted sage
Whom Hudhud taught,—the gracious spirit-bird,—
How to construct the pillar, teach the time!'
So let us say—not 'Since we know, we love,'
But rather 'Since we love, we know enough.'
Perhaps the pillar by a spell controlled
Mushtari in his courses? Added grace
Surely I count it that the sage devised,
Beside celestial service, ministry
To all the land, by one sharp shade at noon
Falling as folk foresee. Once more then, Friend—
(What ever in those careless ears of thine

Withal I needs must round thee)—knowledge doubt
Even wherein it seems demonstrable!
Love,—in the claim for love, that 's gratitude
For apprehended pleasure, nowise doubt!
Pay its due tribute,—sure that pleasure is,
While knowledge may be, at the most. See, now!
Eating my breakfast, I thanked God.—'For love
Shown in the cherries' flavour? Consecrate
So petty an example?' There 's the fault!
We circumscribe omnipotence. Search sand
To unearth water: if first handful scooped
Yields thee a draught, what need of digging down
Full fifty fathoms deep to find a spring
Whereof the pulse might deluge half the land?
Drain the sufficient drop, and praise what checks
The drouth that glues thy tongue,—what more would help
A brimful cistern? Ask the cistern's boon
When thou wouldst solace camels: in thy case,
Relish the drop and love the loveable!"

"And what may be unloveable?"

"Why, hate!
If out of sand comes sand and nought but sand
Affect not to be quaffing at mirage,
Nor nickname pain as pleasure. That, belike,
Constitutes just the trial of thy wit
And worthiness to gain promotion,—hence,
Proves the true purpose of thine actual life.
Thy soul's environment of things perceived,
Things visible and things invisible,
Fact, fancy—all was purposed to evolve
This and this only—was thy wit of worth
To recognize the drop's use, love the same,
And loyally declare against mirage

A PILLAR AT SEBZEVAR

Though all the world asseverated dust
Was good to drink? Say, 'what made moist my lip,
That I acknowledged moisture : ' thou art saved !

" For why? The creature and creator stand
Rightly related so. Consider well !
Were knowledge all thy faculty, then God
Must be ignored : love gains him by first leap.
Frankly accept the creatureship : ask good
To love for : press bold to the tether's end
Allotted to this life's intelligence !
'So we offend?' Will it offend thyself
If,—impuissance praying potency,—
Thy child beseech that thou command the sun
Rise bright to-morrow—thou, he thinks supreme
In power and goodness, why shouldst thou refuse?
Afterward, when the child matures, perchance
The fault were greater if, with wit full-grown,
The stripling dared to ask for a dinar,
Than that the boy cried 'Pluck Sitara down
And give her me to play with !' 'T is for him
To have no bounds to his belief in thee :
For thee it also is to let her shine
Lustrous and lonely, so best serving him !"

Ask not one least word of praise !
  Words declare your eyes are bright?
What then meant that summer day's
Silence spent in one long gaze?
  Was my silence wrong or right?

Words of praise were all to seek !
  Face of you and form of you,
Did they find the praise so weak
When my lips just touched your cheek—
  Touch which let my soul come through?

A BEAN-STRIPE: ALSO, APPLE-EATING

"Look, I strew beans" . . .

(Ferishtah, we premise,
Strove this way with a scholar's cavilment
Who put the peevish question: "Sir, be frank!
A good thing or a bad thing—Life is which?
Shine and shade, happiness and misery
Battle it out there: which force beats, I ask?
If I pick beans from out a bushelful—
This one, this other,—then demand of thee
What colour names each justly in the main,—
'Black' I expect, and 'White' ensues reply:
No hesitation for what speck, spot, splash
Of either colour's opposite, intrudes
To modify thy judgment. Well, for beans
Substitute days,—show, ranged in order, Life—
Then, tell me its true colour! Time is short,
Life's days compose a span,—as brief be speech!
Black I pronounce for, like the Indian Sage,—
Black—present, past and future, interspersed
With blanks, no doubt, which simple folk style Good
Because not Evil: no, indeed? Forsooth
Black's shade on White is White too! What 's
the worst
Of Evil but that, past, it overshades
The else-exempted present?—memory,
We call the plague! 'Nay, but our memory fades
And leaves the past unsullied!' Does it so?
Why, straight the purpose of such breathing-space,

Such respite from past ill, grows plain enough !
What follows on remembrance of the past ?
Fear of the future ! Life, from birth to death,
Means—either looking back on harm escaped,
Or looking forward to that harm's return
With tenfold power of harming. Black, not White,
Never the whole consummate quietude
Life should be, troubled by no fear !—nor hope—
I 'll say, since lamplight dies in noontide, hope
Loses itself in certainty. Such lot
Man's might have been : I leave the consequence
To bolder critics of the Primal Cause ;
Such am not I : but, man—as man I speak :
Black is the bean-throw : evil is the Life ! ")

" Look, I strew beans "—resumed Ferishtah—
" beans
Blackish and whitish ; what they figure forth
Shall be man's sum of moments, bad and good,
That make up Life,—each moment when he feels
Pleasure or pain, his poorest fact of sense,
Consciousness anyhow : there 's stand the first ;
Whence next advance shall be from points to line,
Singulars to a series, parts to whole,
And moments to the Life. How look they now,
Viewed in the large, those little joys and griefs
Ranged duly all a-row at last, like beans
—These which I strew ? This bean was white,
this—black,
Set by itself,—but see if, good and bad
Each following either in companionship,
Black have not grown less black and white less
white,
Till blackish seems but dun, and whitish—grey,
And the whole line turns—well, or black to thee
Or white belike to me—no matter which :

The main result is—both are modified
According to our eye's scope, power of range
Before and after. Black dost call this bean?
What, with a whiteness in its wake, which—see—
Suffuses half its neighbour?—and, in turn,
Lowers its pearliness late absolute,
Frowned upon by the jet which follows hard—
Else wholly white my bean were. Choose a joy!
Bettered it was by sorrow gone before,
And sobered somewhat by the shadowy sense
Of sorrow which came after or might come.
Joy, sorrow,—by precedence, subsequence—
Either on each, make fusion, mix in Life
That 's both and neither wholly: grey or dun?
Dun thou decidest? grey prevails, say I:
Wherefore? Because my view is wide enough,
Reaches from first to last nor winks at all:
Motion achieves it: stop short—fast we stick,—
Probably at the bean that 's blackest.

"Since—
Son, trust me,—this I know and only this—
I am in motion, and all things beside
That circle round my passage through their midst,—
Motionless, these are, as regarding me:
—Which means, myself I solely recognize.
They too may recognize themselves, not me,
For aught I know or care: but plain they serve
This, if no other purpose—stuff to try
And test my power upon of raying light
And lending hue to all things as I go
Moonlike through vapour. Mark the flying orb!
Think'st thou the halo, painted still afresh
At each new cloud-fleece pierced and passaged through,

A BEAN-STRIPE: ALSO, APPLE-EATING

This was and is and will be evermore
Coloured in permanence? The glory swims
Girdling the glory-giver, swallowed straight
By night's abysmal gloom, unglorified
Behind as erst before the advancer: gloom?
Faced by the onward-faring, see, succeeds
From the abandoned heaven a next surprise,
And where 's the gloom now?—silver-smitten straight,
One glow and variegation! So with me,
Who move and make,—myself,—the black, the white,
The good, the bad, of life's environment.
Stand still! black stays black: start again! there 's white
Asserts supremacy: the motion 's all
That colours me my moment: seen as joy?
I have escaped from sorrow, or that was
Or might have been: as sorrow?—thence shall be
Escape as certain: white preceded black,
Black shall give way to white as duly,—so,
Deepest in black means white most imminent.
Stand still,—have no before, no after!—life
Proves death, existence grows impossible
To man like me. 'What else is blessed sleep
But death, then?' Why, a rapture of release
From toil,—that 's sleep's approach: as certainly,
The end of sleep means, toil is triumphed o'er:
These round the blank inconsciousness between
Brightness and brightness, either pushed to blaze
Just through that blank's interposition. Hence
The use of things external: man—that 's I—
Practise thereon my power of casting light,
And calling substance,—when the light I cast
Breaks into colour,—by its proper name
—A truth and yet a falsity: black, white,

Names each bean taken from what lay so close
And threw such tint: pain might mean pain indeed
Seen in the passage past it,—pleasure prove
No mere delusion while I paused to look,—
Though what an idle fancy was that fear
Which overhung and hindered pleasure's hue!
While how, again, pain's shade enhanced the shine
Of pleasure, else no pleasure! Such effects
Came of such causes. Passage at an end,—
Past, present, future pains and pleasures fused
So that one glance may gather blacks and whites
Into a life-time,—like my bean-streak there,
Why, white they whirl into, not black—for me!"

"Ay, but for me? The indubitable blacks,
Immeasurable miseries, here, there
And everywhere i' the world—world outside thine
Paled off so opportunely,—body's plague,
Torment of soul,—where 's found thy fellowship
With wide humanity all round about
Reeling beneath its burden? What 's despair?
Behold that man, that woman, child—nay, brute!
Will any speck of white unblacken life
Splashed, splotched, dyed hell-deep now from end
to end
For him or her or it—who knows? Not I!"

"Nor I, Son! 'It' shall stand for bird, beast, fish,
Reptile, and insect even: take the last!
There 's the palm-aphis, minute miracle
As wondrous every whit as thou or I:
Well, and his world 's the palm-frond, there he 's
born,
Lives, breeds and dies in that circumference,
An inch of green for cradle, pasture-ground,
Purlieu and grave: the palm's use, ask of him!

'To furnish these,' replies his wit: ask thine—
Who see the heaven above, the earth below,
Creation everywhere,—these, each and all
Claim certain recognition from the tree
For special service rendered branch and bole,
Top-tuft and tap-root:—for thyself, thus seen,
Palms furnish dates to eat, and leaves to shade,
—Maybe, thatch huts with,—have another use
Than strikes the aphis. So with me, my Son!
I know my own appointed patch i' the world,
What pleasures me or pains there: all outside—
How he, she, it, and even thou, Son, live,
Are pleased or pained, is past conjecture, once
I pry beneath the semblance,—all that 's fit,
To practise with,—reach where the fact may lie
Fathom-deep lower. There 's the first and last
Of my philosophy. Blacks blur thy white?
Not mine! The aphis feeds, nor finds his leaf
Untenable because a lance-thrust, nay,
Lightning strikes sere a moss-patch close beside,
Where certain other aphids live and love.
Restriction to his single inch of white,
That 's law for him, the aphis: but for me,
The man, the larger-souled, beside my stretch
Of blacks and whites, I see a world of woe
All round about me: one such burst of black
Intolerable o'er the life I count
White in the main, and, yea—white's faintest trace
Were clean abolished once and evermore.
Thus fare my fellows, swallowed up in gloom
So far as I discern: how far is that?
God's care be God's! 'T is mine—to boast no joy
Unsobered by such sorrows of my kind
As sully with their shade my life that shines."

" Reflected possibilities of pain,

Forsooth, just chasten pleasure! Pain itself,—
Fact and not fancy, does not this affect
The general colour?"

"Here and there a touch
Taught me, betimes, the artifice of things—
That all about, external to myself,
Was meant to be suspected,—not revealed
Demonstrably a cheat,—but half seen through,
Lest white should rule unchecked along the line:
Therefore white may not triumph. All the same,
Of absolute and irretrievable
And all-subduing black,—black's soul of black
Beyond white's power to disintensify,—
Of that I saw no sample: such may wreck
My life and ruin my philosophy
To-morrow, doubtless: hence the constant shade
Cast on life's shine,—the tremor that intrudes
When firmest seems my faith in white. Dost ask
'Who is Ferishtah, hitherto exempt
From black experience? Why, if God be just,
Were sundry fellow-mortals singled out
To undergo experience for his sake,
Just that the gift of pain, bestowed on them,
In him might temper to the due degree
Joy's else-excessive largess?' Why, indeed!
Back are we brought thus to the starting-point—
Man's impotency, God's omnipotence,
These stop my answer. Aphis that I am,
How leave my inch-allotment, pass at will
Into my fellow's liberty of range,
Enter into his sense of black and white,
As either, seen by me from outside, seems
Predominatingly the colour? Life,
Lived by my fellow, shall I pass into
And myself live there? No—no more than pass

From Persia, where in sun since birth I bask
Daily, to some ungracious land afar,
Told of by travellers, where the might of snow
Smothers up day, and fluids lose themselves
Frozen to marble. How I bear the sun,
Beat though he may unduly, that I know:
How blood once curdled ever creeps again,
Baffles conjecture: yet since people live
Somehow, resist a clime would conquer me,
Somehow provided for their sake must dawn
Compensative resource. 'No sun, no grapes,—
Then, no subsistence!'—were it wisely said?
Or this well-reasoned—'Do I dare feel warmth
And please my palate here with Persia's vine,
Though, over-mounts,—to trust the traveller,—
Snow, feather thick, is falling while I feast?
What if the cruel winter force his way
Here also?' Son, the wise reply were this:
When cold from over-mounts spikes through and
through
Blood, bone and marrow of Ferishtah,—then,
Time to look out for shelter—time, at least,
To wring the hands and cry 'No shelter serves!'
Shelter, of some sort, no experienced chill
Warrants that I despair to find."

"No less,
Doctors have differed here; thou say'st thy say;
Another man's experience masters thine,
Flat controverted by the sourly-Sage,
The Indian witness who, with faculty
Fine as Ferishtah's, found no white at all
Chequer the world's predominating black,
No good oust evil from supremacy,
So that Life's best was that it led to death.
How of his testimony?"

"Son, suppose
My camel told me: 'Threescore days and ten
I traversed hill and dale, yet never found
Food to stop hunger, drink to stay my drouth;
Yet, here I stand alive, which take in proof
That to survive was found impossible!'
'Nay, rather take thou, non-surviving beast'
(Reply were prompt), 'on flank this thwack of staff
Nowise affecting flesh that 's dead and dry!
Thou wincest? Take correction twice, amend
Next time thy nomenclature! Call white—white!'
The sourly-Sage, for whom life's best was death,
Lived out his seventy years, looked hale, laughed loud,
Liked—above all—his dinner,—lied, in short."

"Lied is a rough phrase: say he fell from truth
In climbing towards it!—sure less faulty so
Than had he sat him down and stayed content
With thy safe orthodoxy, 'White, all white,
White everywhere for certain I should see
Did I but understand how white is black,
As clearer sense than mine would.' Clearer sense,—
Whose may that be? Mere human eyes I boast,
And such distinguish colours in the main,
However any tongue, that 's human too,
Please to report the matter. Dost thou blame
A soul that strives but to see plain, speak true,
Truth at all hazards? Oh, this false for real,
This emptiness which feigns solidity,—
Ever some grey that 's white, and dun that 's black,—
When shall we rest upon the thing itself
Not on its semblance?—Soul—too weak, forsooth,
To cope with fact—wants fiction everywhere!
Mine tires of falsehood: truth at any cost!"

"Take one and try conclusions—this, suppose!
God is all-good, all-wise, all-powerful: truth?
Take it and rest there. What is man? Not God:
None of these absolutes therefore,—yet himself,
A creature with a creature's qualities.
Make them agree, these two conceptions! Each
Abolishes the other. Is man weak,
Foolish and bad? He must be Ahriman,
Co-equal with an Ormuzd, Bad with Good,
Or else a thing made at the Prime Sole Will,
Doing a maker's pleasure—with results
Which—call, the wide world over, 'what must be'—
But, from man's point of view, and only point
Possible to his powers, call—evidence
Of goodness, wisdom, strength? we mock ourselves
In all that 's best of us,—man's blind but sure
Craving for these in very deed not word,
Reality and not illusion. Well,—
Since these nowhere exist—nor there where cause
Must have effect, nor here where craving means
Craving unfollowed by fit consequence
And full supply, aye sought for, never found—
These—what are they but man's own rule of right?
A scheme of goodness recognized by man,
Although by man unrealizable,—
Not God's with whom to will were to perform:
Nowise performed here, therefore never willed.
What follows but that God, who could the best,
Has willed the worst,—while man, with power to match
Will with performance, were deservedly
Hailed the supreme—provided . . . here 's the touch
That breaks the bubble . . . this concept of man's
Were man's own work, his birth of heart and brain,

His native grace, no alien gift at all.
The bubble breaks here. Will of man create?
No more than this my hand which strewed the beans
Produced them also from its finger-tips.
Back goes creation to its source, source prime
And ultimate, the single and the sole."

"How reconcile discordancy,—unite
Notion and notion—God that only can
Yet does not,—man that would indeed
But just as surely cannot,—both in one?
What help occurs to thy intelligence?"

"Ah, the beans,—or,—example better yet,—
A carpet-web I saw once leave the loom
And lie at gorgeous length in Ispahan!
The weaver plied his work with lengths of silk
Dyed each to match some jewel as it might,
And wove them, this by that. 'How comes it, friend,'—
(Quoth I)—'that while, apart, this fiery hue,
That watery dimness, either shocks the eye,
So blinding bright, or else offends again
By dulness,—yet the two, set each by each,
Somehow produce a colour born of both,
A medium profitable to the sight?'
'Such medium is the end whereat I aim,'—
Answered my craftsman: 'there 's no single tinct
Would satisfy the eye's desire to taste
The secret of the diamond: join extremes,
Results a serviceable medium-ghost,
The diamond's simulation. Even so
I needs must blend the quality of man
With quality of God, and so assist
Mere human sight to understand my Life,
What is, what should be,—understand thereby

Wherefore I hate the first and love the last,—
Understand why things so present themselves
To me, placed here to prove I understand.
Thus, from beginning runs the chain to end,
And binds me plain enough. By consequence,
I bade thee tolerate,—not kick and cuff
The man who held that natures did in fact
Blend so, since so thyself must have them blend
In fancy, if it take a flight so far."

"A power, confessed past knowledge, nay, past thought,
—Thus thought thus known!"

"To know of, think about—
Is all man's sum of faculty effects
When exercised on earth's least atom, Son!
What was, what is, what may such atom be?
No answer! Still, what seems it to man's sense?
An atom with some certain properties
Known about, thought of as occasion needs,
—Man's—but occasions of the universe?
Unthinkable, unknowable to man.
Yet, since to think and know fire through and through
Exceeds man, is the warmth of fire unknown,
Its uses—are they so unthinkable?
Pass from such obvious power to powers unseen,
Undreamed of save in their sure consequence:
Take that, we spoke of late, which draws to ground
The staff my hand lets fall: it draws, at least—
Thus much man thinks and knows, if nothing more."

"Ay, but man puts no mind into such power!
He neither thanks it, when an apple drops,

Nor prays it spare his pate while underneath.
Does he thank Summer though it plumped the rind?
Why thank the other force—whate'er its name—
Which gave him teeth to bite and tongue to taste
And throat to let the pulp pass? Force and force,
No end of forces! Have they mind like man?"

"Suppose thou visit our lord Shalim-Shah,
Bringing thy tribute as appointed. 'Here
Come I to pay my due!' Whereat one slave
Obsequious spreads a carpet for thy foot,
His fellow offers sweetmeats, while a third
Prepares a pipe: what thanks or praise have they?
Such as befit prompt service. Gratitude
Goes past them to the Shah whose gracious nod
Set all the sweet civility at work;
But for his ordinance, I much suspect,
My scholar had been left to cool his heels
Uncarpeted, or warm them—likelier still—
With bastinado for intrusion. Slaves
Needs must obey their master: 'force and force,
No end of forces,' act as bids some force
Supreme o'er all and each: where find that one?
How recognize him? Simply as thou didst
The Shah—by reasoning 'Since I feel a debt,
Behoves me pay the same to one aware
I have my duty, he his privilege.'
Didst thou expect the slave who charged thy pipe
Would serve as well to take thy tribute-bag
And save thee further trouble?"

"Be it so!
The sense within me that I owe a debt
Assures me—somewhere must be somebody
Ready to take his due. All comes to this—

Where due is, there acceptance follows: find
Him who accepts the due! and why look far?
Behold thy kindred compass thee about!
Ere thou wast born and after thou shalt die,
Heroic man stands forth as Shalim-Shah.
Rustem and Gew, Gudarz and all the rest,
How come they short of lordship that 's to seek?
Dead worthies! but men live undoubtedly
Gifted as Sindokht, sage Sulayman's match,
Valiant like Kawah: ay, and while earth lasts
Such heroes shall abound there—all for thee
Who profitest by all the present, past,
And future operation of thy race.
Why, then, o'erburdened with a debt of thanks,
Look wistful for some hand from out the clouds
To take it, when, all round, a multitude
Would ease thee in a trice?"

"Such tendered thanks
Would tumble back to who craved riddance, Son!
—Who but my sorry self? See! stars are out—
Stars which, unconscious of thy gaze beneath,
Go glorifying, and glorify thee too
—Those Seven Thrones, Zurah's beauty, weird
Parwin!
Whether shall love and praise to stars be paid
Or—say—some Mubid who, for good to thee
Blind at thy birth, by magic all his own
Opened thine eyes, and gave the sightless sight,
Let the stars' glory enter? Say his charm
Worked while thyself lay sleeping: as he went
Thou wakedst: 'What a novel sense have I!
Whom shall I love and praise?' 'The stars, each
orb
Thou standest rapt beneath,' proposes one:
'Do not they live their life, and please themselves,

And so please thee? What more is requisite?'
Make thou this answer: 'If indeed no mage
Opened my eyes and worked a miracle,
Then let the stars thank me who apprehend
That such an one is white, such other blue!
But for my apprehension both were blank.
Cannot I close my eyes and bid my brain
Make whites and blues, conceive without stars' help,
New qualities of colour? were my sight
Lost or misleading, would yon red—I judge
A ruby's benefaction—stand for aught
But green from vulgar glass? Myself appraise
Lustre and lustre; should I overlook
Fomalhaut and declare some fen-fire king,
Who shall correct me, lend me eyes he trusts
No more than I trust mine? My mage for me!
I never saw him: if he never was,
I am the arbitrator!' No, my Son!
Let us sink down to thy similitude:
I eat my apple, relish what is ripe—
The sunny side, admire its rarity
Since half the tribe is wrinkled, and the rest
Hide commonly a maggot in the core,—
And down Zerdusht goes with due smack of lips:
But—thank an apple? He who made my mouth
To masticate, my palate to approve,
My maw to further the concoction—Him
I thank,—but for whose work, the orchard's wealth
Might prove so many gall-nuts—stocks or stones
For aught that I should think, or know, or care."

A BEAN-STRIPE: ALSO, APPLE-EATING

"Why from the world," Ferishtah smiled, "should thanks
  Go to this work of mine? If worthy praise,
Praised let it be and welcome: as verse ranks,
  So rate my verse: if good therein outweighs
  Aught faulty judged, judge justly! Justice says:
Be just to fact, or blaming or approving:
But—generous? No, nor loving!

"Loving! what claim to love has work of mine?
  Concede my life were emptied of its gains
To furnish forth and fill work's strict confine,
  Who works so for the world's sake—he complains
  With cause when hate, not love, rewards his pains.
I looked beyond the world for truth and beauty:
Sought, found and did my duty."

EPILOGUE

Oh, Love—no, Love! All the noise below, Love,
Groanings all and moanings—none of Life I lose!
All of Life 's a cry just of weariness and woe, Love—
"Hear at least, thou happy one!" How can I, Love, but choose?

Only, when I do hear, sudden circle round me
—Much as when the moon's might frees a space from cloud—
Iridescent splendours: gloom—would else confound me—
Barriered off and banished far—bright-edged the blackest shroud!

Thronging through the cloud-rift, whose are they, the faces
Faint revealed yet sure divined, the famous ones of old?
"What"—they smile—"our names, our deeds so soon erases
Time upon his tablet where Life's glory lies enrolled?

"Was it for mere fool's-play, make-believe and mumming,
So we battled it like men, not boylike sulked or whined?

EPILOGUE

Each of us heard clang God's 'Come!' and each
was coming:
Soldiers all, to forward-face, not sneaks to lag
behind!

"How of the field's fortune? That concerned
our Leader!
Led, we struck our stroke nor cared for doings
left and right:
Each as on his sole head, failer or succeeder,
Lay the blame or lit the praise: no care for
cowards: fight!"

Then the cloud-rift broadens, spanning earth
that 's under,
Wide our world displays its worth, man's strife
and strife's success:
All the good and beauty, wonder crowning
wonder,
Till my heart and soul applaud perfection,
nothing less.

Only, at heart's utmost joy and triumph, terror
Sudden turns the blood to ice: a chill wind
disencharms
All the late enchantment! What if all be error—
If the halo irised round my head were, Love,
thine arms?

Palazzo Giustinian-Recanati, Venice:
December 1, 1883.

PARLEYINGS
WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE
OF IMPORTANCE IN THEIR DAY

TO WIT: BERNARD DE MANDEVILLE
DANIEL BARTOLI
CHRISTOPHER SMART
GEORGE BUBB DODINGTON
FRANCIS FURINI
GERARD DE LAIRESSE
AND CHARLES AVISON

INTRODUCED BY

A DIALOGUE BETWEEN APOLLO AND THE FATES

CONCLUDED BY

ANOTHER BETWEEN JOHN FUST AND HIS FRIENDS

IN MEMORIAM

J. MILSAND

OBIIT IV. SEPT. MDCCCLXXXVI

Absens absentem auditque videtque

PARLEYINGS
WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

1887

APOLLO AND THE FATES

A PROLOGUE

(Hymn. in Mercurium, v. 559. Eumenides, vv. 693–4, 697–8.
Alcestis, vv. 12, 33.)

APOLLO [*From above.*

FLAME at my footfall, Parnassus! Apollo,
  Breaking a-blaze on thy topmost peak,
Burns thence, down to the depths—dread hollow—
  Haunt of the Dire Ones. Haste! They wreak
Wrath on Admetus whose respite I seek.

THE FATES [*Below. Darkness.*

Dragonwise couched in the womb of our Mother,
  Coiled at thy nourishing heart's core, Night!
Dominant Dreads, we, one by the other,
  Deal to each mortal his dole of light
On earth—the upper, the glad, the bright.

CLOTHO

Even so: thus from my loaded spindle
  Plucking a pinch of the fleece, lo, "Birth"
Brays from my bronze lip: life I kindle:
  Look, 't is a man! go, measure on earth
The minute thy portion, whatever its worth!

APOLLO AND THE FATES

LACHESIS

Woe-purfled, weal-prankt,—ifitspeed, ifitlinger,—
  Life's substance and show are determined by me,
Who, meting out, mixing with sure thumb and
  finger,
  Lead life the due length : is all smoothness and
  glee,
All tangle and grief? Take the lot, my decree!

ATROPOS

—Which I make an end of: the smooth as the
  tangled
  My shears cut asunder: each snap shrieks
  "One more
Mortal makes sport for us Moirai who dangled
  The puppet grotesquely till earth's solid floor
Proved film he fell through, lost in Nought as
  before."

CLOTHO

I spin thee a thread. Live, Admetus! Produce
  him!

LACHESIS

  Go,—brave, wise, good, happy! Now chequer
    the thread!
He is slaved for, yet loved by a god. I unloose
    him
  A goddess-sent plague. He has conquered, is
    wed,
Men crown him, he stands at the height,—

ATROPOS

  He is . . .

APOLLO [*Entering: Light.*
  "Dead?"

A PROLOGUE

Nay, swart spinsters! So I surprise you
  Making and marring the fortunes of Man?
Huddling—no marvel, your enemy eyes you—
  Head by head bat-like, blots under the ban
Of daylight earth's blessing since time began!

THE FATES

Back to thy blest earth, prying Apollo!
  Shaft upon shaft transpierce with thy beams
Earth to the centre,—spare but this hollow
  Hewn out of Night's heart, where our mystery seems
Mewed from day's malice: wake earth from her dreams!

APOLLO

Crones, 't is your dusk selves I startle from slumber:
  Day's god deposes you—queens Night-crowned!
—Plying your trade in a world ye encumber,
  Fashioning Man's web of life—spun, wound,
Left the length ye allot till a clip strews the ground!

Behold I bid truce to your doleful amusement—
  Annulled by a sunbeam!

THE FATES

Boy, are not we peers?

APOLLO

You with the spindle grant birth: whose inducement
  But yours—with the niggardly digits—endears
To mankind chance and change, good and evil?
  Your shears . . .

APOLLO AND THE FATES

ATROPOS

Ay, mine end the conflict: so much is no fable.
We spin, draw to length, cut asunder: what then?
So it was, and so is, and so shall be: art able
To alter life's law for ephemeral men?

APOLLO

Nor able nor willing. To threescore and ten
Extend but the years of Admetus! Disaster
O'ertook me, and, banished by Zeus, I became
A servant to one who forbore me though master:
True lovers were we. Discontinue your game,
Let him live whom I loved, then hate on, all the same!

THE FATES

And what if we granted—law-flouter, use-trampler—
His life at the suit of an upstart? Judge, thou—
Of joy were it fuller, of span because ampler?
For love's sake, not hate's, end Admetus—ay, now—
Not a gray hair on head, nor a wrinkle on brow!
For, boy, 't is illusion: from thee comes a glimmer
Transforming to beauty life blank at the best.
Withdraw—and how looks life at worst, when to shimmer
Succeeds the sure shade, and Man's lot frowns—confessed
Mere blackness chance-brightened? Whereof shall attest
The truth this same mortal, the darling thou stylest,
Whom love would advantage,—eke out, day by day,

A life which 't is solely thyself reconcilest
Thy friend to endure,—life with hope: take away
Hope's gleam from Admetus, he spurns it. For, say—

What 's infancy? Ignorance, idleness, mischief:
Youth ripens to arrogance, foolishness, greed:
Age—impotence, churlishness, rancour: call *this* chief
Of boons for thy loved one? Much rather bid speed
Our function, let live whom thou hatest indeed!

Persuade thee, bright boy-thing! Our eld be instructive!

APOLLO

And certes youth owns the experience of age.
Ye hold then, grave seniors, my beams are productive
—They solely—of good that 's mere semblance, engage
Man's eye—gilding evil, Man's true heritage?

THE FATES

So, even so! From without,—at due distance
If viewed,—set a-sparkle, reflecting thy rays,—
Life mimics the sun: but withdraw such assistance,
The counterfeit goes, the reality stays—
An ice-ball disguised as a fire-orb.

APOLLO

What craze

Possesses the fool then whose fancy conceits him
As happy?

THE FATES

Man happy?

APOLLO

If otherwise—solve
This doubt which besets me! What friend ever greets him
Except with "Live long as the seasons revolve,"
Not "Death to thee straightway"? Your doctrines absolve

Such hailing from hatred: yet Man should know best.
He talks it, and glibly, as life were a load
Man fain would be rid of: when put to the test,
He whines "Let it lie, leave me trudging the road
That is rugged so far, but methinks . . ."

THE FATES

Ay, 't is owed

To that glamour of thine, he bethinks him "Once past
The stony, some patch, nay, a smoothness of sward
Awaits my tired foot: life turns easy at last"—
Thy largess so lures him, he looks for reward
Of the labour and sorrow.

APOLLO

It seems, then—debarred
Of illusion—(I needs must acknowledge the plea)
Man desponds and despairs. Yet,—still further to draw

A PROLOGUE

Due profit from counsel,—suppose there should be
Some power in himself, some compensative law
By virtue of which, independently . . .

THE FATES

Faugh!

Strength hid in the weakling!
What bowl-shape hast there,
Thus laughingly proffered? A gift to our shrine?
Thanks—worsted in argument! Not so? Declare
Its purpose!

APOLLO

I proffer earth's product, not mine.
Taste, try, and approve Man's invention of—WINE!

THE FATES

We feeding suck honeycombs.

APOLLO

Sustenance meagre!
Such fare breeds the fumes that show all things amiss.
Quaff wine,—how the spirits rise nimble and eager,
Unscale the dim eyes! To Man's cup grant one kiss
Of your lip, then allow—no enchantment like this!

CLOTHO

Unhook wings, unhood brows! Dost hearken?

LACHESIS

I listen:
I see—smell the food these fond mortals prefer
To our feast, the bee's bounty!

ATROPOS

The thing leaps! But—glisten
Its best, I withstand it—unless all concur
In adventure so novel.

APOLLO

Ye drink?

THE FATES

We demur.

APOLLO

Sweet Trine, be indulgent nor scout the contriv-
ance
Of Man—Bacchus-prompted! The juice, I up-
hold,
Illuminates gloom without sunny connivance,
Turns fear into hope and makes cowardice bold,—
Touching all that is leadlike in life turns it gold!

THE FATES

Faith foolish as falsè!

APOLLO

But essay it, soft sisters!
Then mock as ye may. Lift the chalice to lip!
Good: thou next—and thou! Seems the web, to
you twisters
Of life's yarn, so worthless?

CLOTHO

Who guessed that one sip
Would impart such a lightness of limb?

LACHESIS

I could skip

A PROLOGUE

In a trice from the pied to the plain in my woof!
What parts each from either? A hair's breadth, no inch.
Once learn the right method of stepping aloof,
Though on black next foot falls, firm I fix it, nor flinch,
—Such my trust white succeeds!

ATROPOS

One could live—at a pinch!

APOLLO

What, beldames? Earth's yield, by Man's skill, can effect
Such a cure of sick sense that ye spy the relation
Of evil to good? But drink deeper, correct
Blear sight more convincingly still! Take your station
Beside me, drain dregs! Now for edification!

Whose gift have ye gulped? Thank not me but my brother,
Blithe Bacchus, our youngest of gcdships. 'T was he
Found all boons to all men, by one god or other
Already conceded, so judged there must be
New guerdon to grace the new advent, you see!

Else how would a claim to Man's homage arise?
The plan lay arranged of his mixed woe and weal,
So disposed—such Zeus' will--with design to make wise
The witless—that false things were mingled with real,
Good with bad: such the lot whereto law set the seal.

Now, human of instinct—since Semele's son,
Yet minded divinely—since fathered by Zeus,
With nought Bacchus tampered, undid not things done,
Owned wisdom anterior, would spare wont and use,
Yetchange—without shock to old rule—introduce.

Regard how your cavern from crag-tip to base
Frowns sheer, height and depth adamantine, one death!
I rouse with a beam the whole rampart, displace
No splinter—yet see how my flambeau, beneath
And above, bids this gem wink, that crystal unsheath!

Withdraw beam—disclosure once more Night forbids you
Of spangle and sparkle—Day's chance-gift, surmised
Rock's permanent birthright: my potency rids you
No longer of darkness, yet light—recognized—
Proves darkness a mask: day lives on though disguised.

If Bacchus by wine's aid avail so to fluster
Your sense, that life's fact grows from adverse and thwart
To helpful and kindly by means of a cluster—
Mere hand-squeeze, earth's nature sublimed by Man's art—
Shall Bacchus claim thanks wherein Zeus has no part?

Zeus—wisdom anterior? No, maids, be admonished!
If morn's touch at base worked such wonders, much more

A PROLOGUE

Had noontide in absolute glory astonished
  Your den, filled a-top to o'erflowing. I pour
No such mad confusion. 'T is Man's to explore
Up and down, inch by inch, with the taper his reason :
  No torch, it suffices—held deftly and straight.
Eyes, purblind at first, feel their way in due season,
  Accept good with bad, till unseemly debate
Turns concord—despair, acquiescence in fate.

Who works this but Zeus? Are not instinct and impulse,
  Not concept and incept his work through Man's soul
On Man's sense? Just as wine ere it reach brain must brim pulse,
  Zeus' flash stings the mind that speeds body to goal,
Bids pause at no part but press on, reach the whole.

For petty and poor is the part ye envisage
  When—(quaff away, cummers !)—ye view, last and first,
As evil Man's earthly existence. Come ! *Is* age,
  Is infancy—manhood—so uninterspersed
With good—some faint sprinkle?

CLOTHO

I 'd speak if I durst.

APOLLO

Draughts dregward loose tongue-tie.

LACHESIS

I 'd see, did no web
Set eyes somehow winking.

APOLLO

Drains-deep lies their purge
—True collyrium!

ATROPOS

Words, surging at high-tide, soon ebb
From starved ears.

APOLLO

Drink but down to the source, they resurge.
Join hands! Yours and yours too! A dance or a dirge?

CHORUS

Quashed be our quarrel! Sourly and smilingly,
Bare and gowned, bleached limbs and browned,
Drive we a dance, three and one, reconcilingly,
Thanks to the cup where dissension is drowned,
Defeat proves triumphant and slavery crowned.

Infancy? What if the rose-streak of morning
Pale and depart in a passion of tears?
Once to have hoped is no matter for scorning!
Love once—e'en love's disappointment endears!
A minute's success pays the failure of years.

Manhood—the actual? Nay, praise the potential!
(Bound upon bound, foot it around!)
What *is?* No, what *may* be—sing! that 's Man's essential!
(Ramp, tramp, stamp and compound
Fancy with fact—the lost secret is found!)

Age? Why, fear ends there: the contest concluded,
Man *did* live his life, *did* escape from the fray:

Not scratchless but unscathed, he somehow eluded
Each blow fortune dealt him, and conquers to-day:
To-morrow—new chance and fresh strength,—might we say?

Laud then Man's life—no defeat but a triumph!
[*Explosion from the earth's centre.*

CLOTHO

Ha, loose hands!

LACHESIS

I reel in a swound.

ATROPOS

Horror yawns under me, while from on high—humph!
Lightnings astound, thunders resound,
Vault-roof reverberates, groans the ground!
[*Silence.*

APOLLO

I acknowledge.

THE FATES

Hence, trickster! Straight sobered are we!
The portent assures 't was our tongue spoke the truth,
Not thine. While the vapour encompassed us three
We conceived and bore knowledge—a bantling uncouth,
Old brains shudder back from: so—take it, rash youth!

Lick the lump into shape till a cry comes!

APOLLO AND THE FATES

APOLLO

I hear.

THE FATES

Dumb music, dead eloquence! Say it, or sing!
What was quickened in us and thee also?

APOLLO

I fear.

THE FATES

Half female, half male—go, ambiguous thing!
While we speak—perchance sputter—pick up what we fling!

Known yet ignored, nor divined nor unguessed,
Such is Man's law of life. Do we strive to declare
What is ill, what is good in our spinning? Worst, best,
Change hues of a sudden: now here and now there
Flits the sign which decides: all about yet nowhere.

'T is willed so,—that Man's life be lived, first to last,
Up and down, through and through,—not in portions, forsooth,
To pick and to choose from. Our shuttles fly fast,
Weave living, not life sole and whole: as age—youth,
So death completes living, shows life in its truth.

Man learningly lives: till death helps him—no lore!
It is doom and must be. Dost submit?

A PROLOGUE

APOLLO

I assent—
Concede but Admetus! So much if no more
Of my prayer grant as peace-pledge! Be gracious though, blent,
Good and ill, love and hate streak your life-gift!

THE FATES

Content!

Such boon we accord in due measure. Life's term
We lengthen should any be moved for love's sake
To forego life's fulfilment, renounce in the germ
Fruit mature—bliss or woe—either infinite.
Take
Or leave thy friend's lot: on his head be the stake!

APOLLO

On mine, griesly gammers! Admetus, I know thee!
Thou prizest the right these unwittingly give
Thy subjects to rush, pay obedience they owe thee!
Importunate one with another they strive
For the glory to die that their king may survive.

Friends rush: and who first in all Pheræ appears
But thy father to serve as thy substitute?

CLOTHO

Bah!

APOLLO

Ye wince? Then his mother, well-stricken in years,
Advances her claim—or his wife—

LACHESIS

Tra-la-la !

APOLLO

But he spurns the exchange, rather dies !

ATROPOS

Ha, ha, ha ! 265

[*Apollo ascends.* *Darkness.*

WITH BERNARD DE MANDEVILLE

I

Ay, this same midnight, by this chair of mine,
Come and review thy counsels: art thou still
Staunch to their teaching?—not as fools opine
Its purport might be, but as subtler skill
Could, through turbidity, the loaded line
Of logic casting, sound deep, deeper, till
It touched a quietude and reached a shrine
And recognized harmoniously combine
Evil with good, and hailed truth's triumph—thine,
Sage dead long since, Bernard de Mandeville!

II

Only, 't is no fresh knowledge that I crave,
Fuller truth yet, new gainings from the grave;
Here we alive must needs deal fairly, turn
To what account Man may Man's portion, learn
Man's proper play with truth in part, before
Entrusted with the whole. I ask no more
Than smiling witness that I do my best
With doubtful doctrine: afterward the rest!
So, silent face me while I think and speak!
A full disclosure? Such would outrage law.
Law deals the same with soul and body: seek
Full truth my soul may, when some babe, I saw
A new-born weakling, starts up strong—not
weak—
Man every whit, absolved from earning awe,
Pride, rapture, if the soul attains to wreak

Its will on flesh, at last can thrust, lift, draw,
As mind bids muscle—mind which long has striven,
Painfully urging body's impotence
To effort whereby—once law's barrier riven,
Life's rule abolished—body might dispense
With infancy's probation, straight be given
—Not by foiled darings, fond attempts back-driven,
Fine faults of growth, brave sins which saint when shriven—
To stand full-statured in magnificence.

III

No: as with body so deals law with soul
That 's stung to strength through weakness, strives for good
Through evil,—earth its race-ground, heaven its goal,
Presumably: so far I understood
Thy teaching long ago. But what means this
—Objected by a mouth which yesterday
Was magisterial in antithesis
To half the truths we hold, or trust we may,
Though tremblingly the while? "No sign"—groaned he—
"No stirring of God's finger to denote
He wills that right should have supremacy
On earth, not wrong! How helpful could we quote
But one poor instance when he interposed
Promptly and surely and beyond mistake
Between oppression and its victim, closed
Accounts with sin for once, and bade us wake
From our long dream that justice bears no sword,
Or else forgets whereto its sharpness serves!
So might we safely mock at what unnerves

Faith now, be spared the sapping fear's increase
That haply evil's strife with good shall cease
Never on earth. Nay, after earth, comes peace
Born out of life-long battle? Man's lip curves
With scorn: there, also, what if justice swerves
From dealing doom, sets free by no swift stroke
Right fettered here by wrong, but leaves life's yoke—
Death should loose man from—fresh laid, past release?"

IV

Bernard de Mandeville, confute for me
This parlous friend who captured or set free
Thunderbolts at his pleasure, yet would draw
Back, panic-stricken by some puny straw
Thy gold-rimmed amber-headed cane had whisked
Out of his pathway if the object risked
Encounter, 'scaped thy kick from buckled shoe!
As when folk heard thee in old days pooh-pooh
Addison's tye-wig preachment, grant this friend—
(Whose groan I hear, with guffaw at the end
Disposing of mock-melancholy)—grant
His bilious mood one potion, ministrant
Of homely wisdom, healthy wit! For, hear!
"With power and will, let preference appear
By intervention ever and aye, help good
When evil's mastery is understood
In some plain outrage, and triumphant wrong
Tramples weak right to nothingness: nay, long
Ere such sad consummation brings despair
To right's adherents, ah, what help it were
If wrong lay strangled in the birth—each head
Of the hatched monster promptly crushed, instead
Of spared to gather venom! We require
No great experience that the inch-long worm,

Free of our heel, would grow to vomit fire,
And one day plague the world in dragon form.
So should wrong merely peep abroad to meet
Wrong's due quietus, leave our world's way safe
For honest walking."

V

Sage, once more repeat
Instruction! 'T is a sore to soothe not chafe.
Ah, Fabulist, what luck, could I contrive
To coax from thee another "Grumbling Hive"!
My friend himself wrote fables short and sweet:
Ask him—"Suppose the Gardener of Man's ground
Plants for a purpose, side by side with good,
Evil—(and that he does so—look around!
What does the field show?)—were it understood
That purposely the noxious plant was found
Vexing the virtuous, poison close to food,
If, at first stealing-forth of life in stalk
And leaflet-promise, quick his spud should baulk
Evil from budding foliage, bearing fruit?
Such timely treatment of the offending root
Might strike the simple as wise husbandry,
But swift sure extirpation scarce would suit
Shrewder observers. Seed once sown thrives: why
Frustrate its product, miss the quality
Which sower binds himself to count upon?
Had seed fulfilled the destined purpose, gone
Unhindered up to harvest—what know I
But proof were gained that every growth of good
Sprang consequent on evil's neighbourhood?"
So said your shrewdness: true—so did not say
That other sort of theorists who held
Mere unintelligence prepared the way
For either seed's upsprouting: you repelled

Their notion that both kinds could sow themselves.
True! but admit 't is understanding delves
And drops each germ, what else but folly thwarts
The doer's settled purpose? Let the sage
Concede a use to evil, though there starts
Full many a burgeon thence, to disengage
With thumb and finger lest it spoil the yield
Too much of good's main tribute! But our main
Tough-tendoned mandrake-monster—purge the field
Of him for once and all? It follows plain
Who set him there to grow beholds repealed
His primal law: his ordinance proves vain:
And what beseems a king who cannot reign,
But to drop sceptre valid arm should wield?

VI

"Still there 's a parable"—retorts my friend—
"Shows agriculture with a difference!
What of the crop and weeds which solely blend
Because, once planted, none may pluck them thence?
The Gardener contrived thus? Vain pretence!
An enemy it was who unawares
Ruined the wheat by interspersing tares.
Where 's our desiderated forethought? Where 's
Knowledge, where power and will in evidence?
'T is Man's-play merely! Craft foils rectitude,
Malignity defeats beneficence.
And grant, at very last of all, the feud
'Twixt good and evil ends, strange thoughts intrude
Though good be garnered safely and good's foe
Bundled for burning. Thoughts steal: 'even so—
Why grant tares leave to thus o'ertop, o'ertower
Their field-mate, boast the stalk and flaunt the flower,

Triumph one sunny minute? Knowledge, power
And will thus worked? Man's fancy makes the fault!
Man, with the narrow mind, must cram inside
His finite God's infinitude,—earth's vault
He bids comprise the heavenly far and wide,
Since Man may claim a right to understand
What passes understanding. So, succinct
And trimly set in order, to be scanned
And scrutinized, lo—the divine lies linked
Fast to the human, free to move as moves
Its proper match: awhile they keep the grooves,
Discreetly side by side together pace,
Till sudden comes a stumble incident
Likely enough to Man's weak-footed race,
And he discovers—wings in rudiment,
Such as he boasts, which full-grown, free-distent
Would lift him skyward, fail of flight while pent
Within humanity's restricted space.
Abjure each fond attempt to represent
The formless, the illimitable! Trace
No outline, try no hint of human face
Or form or hand!"

VII

Friend, here 's a tracing meant
To help a guess at truth you never knew.
Bend but those eyes now, using mind's eye too,
And note—sufficient for all purposes—
The ground-plan—map you long have yearned for—yes,
Made out in markings—more what artist can?—
Goethe's Estate in Weimar,—just a plan!
A. is the House, and B. the Garden-gate,
And C. the Grass-plot—you 've the whole estate

Letter by letter, down to Y. the Pond,
And Z. the Pig-stye. Do you look beyond
The algebraic signs, and captious say
"Is A. the House? But where 's the Roof to A.,
Where 's Door, where 's Window? Needs must
House have such!"
Ay, that were folly. Why so very much
More foolish than our mortal purblind way
Of seeking in the symbol no mere point
To guide our gaze through what were else inane,
But things—their solid selves? "Is, joint by
joint,
Orion man-like,—as these dots explain
His constellation? Flesh composed of suns—
How can such be?" exclaim the simple ones.
Look through the sign to the thing signified—
Shown nowise, point by point at best descried,
Each an orb's topmost sparkle: all beside
Its shine is shadow: turn the orb one jot—
Up flies the new flash to reveal 't was not
The whole sphere late flamboyant in your ken!

VIII

"What need of symbolizing? Fitlier men
Would take on tongue mere facts—few, faint and
far,
Still facts not fancies: quite enough they are,
That Power, that Knowledge, and that Will,—
add then
Immensity, Eternity: these jar
Nowise with our permitted thought and speech.
Why human attributes?"

A myth may teach:
Only, who better would expound it thus
Must be Euripides not Æschylus.

IX

Boundingly up through Night's wall dense and dark,
Embattled crags and clouds, outbroke the Sun
Above the conscious earth, and one by one
Her heights and depths absorbed to the last spark
His fluid glory, from the far fine ridge
Of mountain-granite which, transformed to gold,
Laughed first the thanks back, to the vale's dusk fold
On fold of vapour-swathing, like a bridge
Shattered beneath some giant's stamp. Night wist
Her work done and betook herself in mist
To marsh and hollow there to bide her time
Blindly in acquiescence. Everywhere
Did earth acknowledge Sun's embrace sublime
Thrilling her to the heart of things : since there
No ore ran liquid, no spar branched anew,
No arrowy crystal gleamed, but straightway grew
Glad through the inrush—glad nor more nor less
Than, 'neath his gaze, forest and wilderness,
Hill, dale, land, sea, the whole vast stretch and spread,
The universal world of creatures bred
By Sun's munificence, alike gave praise—
All creatures but one only : gaze for gaze,
Joyless and thankless, who—all scowling can—
Protests against the innumerous praises? Man,
Sullen and silent.

Stand thou forth then, state
Thy wrong, thou sole aggrieved—disconsolate—
While every beast, bird, reptile, insect, gay
And glad acknowledges the bounteous day !

X

Man speaks now : "What avails Sun's earth-felt
thrill
To me? Sun penetrates the ore, the plant—
They feel and grow : perchance with subtler skill
He interfuses fly, worm, brute, until
Each favoured object pays life's ministrant
By pressing, in obedience to his will,
Up to completion of the task prescribed,
So stands and stays a type. Myself imbibed
Such influence also, stood and stand complete—
The perfect Man,—head, body, hands and feet,
True to the pattern : but does that suffice?
How of my superadded mind which needs
—Not to be, simply, but to do, and pleads
For—more than knowledge that by some device
Sun quickens matter : mind is nobly fain
To realize the marvel, make—for sense
As mind—the unseen visible, condense
—Myself—Sun's all-pervading influence
So as to serve the needs of mind, explain
What now perplexes. Let the oak increase
His corrugated strength on strength, the palm
Lift joint by joint her fan-fruit, ball and balm,—
Let the coiled serpent bask in bloated peace,—
The eagle, like some skyey derelict,
Drift in the blue, suspended, glorying,—
The lion lord it by the desert-spring,—
What know or care they of the power which pricked
Nothingness to perfection? I, instead,
When all-developed still am found a thing
All-incomplete : for what though flesh had force
Transcending theirs—hands able to unring
The tightened snake's coil, eyes that could out-
course

The eagle's soaring, voice whereat the king
Of carnage couched discrowned? Mind seeks to see,
Touch, understand, by mind inside of me,
The outside mind—whose quickening I attain
To recognize—I only. All in vain
Would mind address itself to render plain
The nature of the essence. Drag what lurks
Behind the operation—that which works
Latently everywhere by outward proof—
Drag that mind forth to face mine? No! aloof
I solely crave that one of all the beams
Which do Sun's work in darkness, at my will
Should operate—myself for once have skill
To realize the energy which streams
Flooding the universe. Above, around,
Beneath—why mocks that mind my own thus found
Simply of service, when the world grows dark,
To half-surmise—were Sun's use understood,
I might demonstrate him supplying food,
Warmth, life, no less the while? To grant one spark
Myself may deal with—make it thaw my blood
And prompt my steps, were truer to the mark
Of mind's requirement than a half-surmise
That somehow secretly is operant
A power all matter feels, mind only tries
To comprehend! Once more—no idle vaunt
'Man comprehends the Sun's self!' Mysteries
At source why probe into? Enough: display,
Make demonstrable, how, by night as day,
Earth's centre and sky's outspan, all 's informed
Equally by Sun's efflux!—source from whence
If just one spark I drew, full evidence
Were mine of fire ineffably enthroned—
Sun's self made palpable to Man!"

BERNARD DE MANDEVILLE

XI

Thus moaned
Man till Prometheus helped him,—as we learn,—
Offered an artifice whereby he drew
Sun's rays into a focus,—plain and true,
The very Sun in little: made fire burn
And henceforth do Man service—glass-conglobed
Though to a pin-point circle—all the same
Comprising the Sun's self, but Sun disrobed
Of that else-unconceived essential flame
Borne by no naked sight. Shall mind's eye strive
Achingly to companion as it may
The supersubtle effluence, and contrive
To follow beam and beam upon their way
Hand-breadth by hand-breadth, till sense faint—confessed
Frustrate, eluded by unknown unguessed
Infinitude of action? Idle quest!
Rather ask aid from optics. Sense, descry
The spectrum—mind, infer immensity!
Little? In little, light, warmth, life are blessed—
Which, in the large, who sees to bless? Not I
More than yourself: so, good my friend, keep still
Trustful with—me? with thee, sage Mandeville!

WITH DANIEL BARTOLI[1]

I

DON, the divinest women that have walked
Our world were scarce those saints of whom we talked.
My saint, for instance—worship if you will!
'T is pity poets need historians' skill:
What legendary 's worth a chronicle?

II

Come, now! A great lord once upon a time
Visited—oh a king, of kings the prime,
To sign a treaty such as never was:
For the king's minister had brought to pass
That this same duke—so style him—must engage
Two of his dukedoms as an heritage
After his death to this exorbitant
Craver of kingship. "Let who lacks go scant,
Who owns much, give the more to!" Why rebuke?
So bids the devil, so obeys the duke.

III

Now, as it happened, at his sister's house
—Duchess herself—indeed the very spouse
Of the king's uncle,—while the deed of gift

[1] A learned and ingenious writer. "Fu Gesuita e Storico della Compagnia; onde scrisse lunghissime storie, le quali sarebbero lette se non fossero ripiene traboccanti di tutte le superstizioni . . . Egli vi ha ficcati dentro tanti miracoloni, che diviene una noia insopportabile a chiunque voglia leggere quelle storie: e anche a me, non mi basto l'animo di proseguire molto avanti." —ANGELO CERUTTI.

Whereby our duke should cut his rights adrift
Was drawing, getting ripe to sign and seal—
What does the frozen heart but uncongeal
And, shaming his transcendent kin and kith,
Whom do the duke's eyes make acquaintance with?
A girl. "What, sister, may this wonder be?"
"Nobody! Good as beautiful is she,
With gifts that match her goodness, no faint flaw
I' the white: she were the pearl you think you saw,
But that she is—what corresponds to white?
Some other stone, the true pearl's opposite,
As cheap as pearls are costly. She 's—now, guess
Her parentage! Once—twice—thrice? Foiled,
confess!
Drugs, duke, her father deals in—faugh, the
scents!—
Manna and senna—such medicaments
For payment he compounds you. Stay—stay—
stay!
I 'll have no rude speech wrong her! Whither
away,
The hot-head? Ah, the scapegrace! She deserves
Respect—compassion, rather! Right it serves
My folly, trusting secrets to a fool!
Already at it, is he? She keeps cool—
Helped by her fan's spread. Well, our state atones
For thus much license, and words break no bones!"
(Hearts, though, sometimes.)

IV

Next morn 't was "Reason, rate,
Rave, sister, on till doomsday! Sure as fate,
I wed that woman—what a woman is
Now that I know, who never knew till this!"
So swore the duke. "I wed her: once again—
Rave, rate, and reason—spend your breath in vain!"

V

At once was made a contract firm and fast,
Published the banns were, only marriage, last,
Required completion when the Church's rite
Should bless and bid depart, make happy quite
The coupled man and wife for evermore:
Which rite was soon to follow. Just before—
All things at all but end—the folk o' the bride
Flocked to a summons. Pomp the duke defied:
"Of ceremony—so much as empowers,
Nought that exceeds, suits best a tie like ours—"
He smiled—"all else were mere futility.
We vow, God hears us: God and you and I—
Let the world keep at distance! This is why
We choose the simplest forms that serve to bind
Lover and lover of the human kind,
No care of what degree—of kings or clowns—
Come blood and breeding. Courtly smiles and frowns
Miss of their mark, would idly soothe or strike
My style and yours—in one style merged alike—
God's man and woman merely. Long ago
'T was rounded in my ears 'Duke, wherefore slow
To use a privilege? Needs must one who reigns
Pay reigning's due: since statecraft so ordains—
Wed for the commonweal's sake! law prescribes
One wife: but to submission license bribes
Unruly nature: mistresses accept
—Well, at discretion!' Prove I so inept
A scholar, thus instructed? Dearest, be
Wife and all mistresses in one to me,
Now, henceforth, and forever!" So smiled he.

VI

Good : but the minister, the crafty one,
Got ear of what was doing—all but done—
Not sooner, though, than the king's very self,
Warned by the sister on how sheer a shelf
Royalty's ship was like to split. "I bar
The abomination ! Mix with muck my star ?
Shall earth behold prodigiously enorbed
An upstart marsh-born meteor sun-absorbed ?
Nuptial me no such nuptials !" "Past dispute,
Majesty speaks with wisdom absolute,"
Admired the minister : "yet, all the same,
I would we may not—while we play his game,
The ducal meteor's—also lose our own,
The solar monarch's : we relieve your throne
Of an ungracious presence, like enough :
Baulked of his project he departs in huff,
And so cuts short—dare I remind the king ?—
Our not so unsuccessful bargaining.
The contract for eventual heritage
Happens to *pari passu* reach the stage
Attained by just this other contract,—each
Unfixed by signature though fast in speech.
Off goes the duke in dudgeon—off withal
Go with him his two dukedoms past recall.
You save a fool from tasting folly's fruit,
Obtain small thanks thereby, and lose to boot
Sagacity's reward. The jest is grim :
The man will mulct you—for amercing him ?
Nay, for . . . permit a poor similitude !
A witless wight in some fantastic mood
Would drown himself : you plunge into the wave,
Pluck forth the undeserving : he, you save,
Pulls you clean under also for your pains.
Sire, little need that I should tax my brains

To help your inspiration!" "Let him sink!
Always contriving"—hints the royal wink—
"To keep ourselves dry while we claim his clothes."

VII

Next day, the appointed day for plighting troths
At eve,—so little time to lose, you see,
Before the Church should weld indissolubly
Bond into bond, wed these who, side by side,
Sit each by other, bold groom, blushing bride,—
At the preliminary banquet, graced
By all the lady's kinsfolk come in haste
To share her triumph,—lo, a thunderclap!
"Who importunes now?" "Such is my mishap—
In the king's name! No need that any stir
Except this lady!" bids the minister:
"With her I claim a word apart, no more:
For who gainsays—a guard is at the door.
Hold, duke! Submit you, lady, as I bow
To him whose mouthpiece speaks his pleasure now!
It well may happen I no whit arrest
Your marriage: be it so,—we hope the best!
By your leave, gentles! Lady, pray you, hence!
Duke, with my soul and body's deference!"

VIII

Doors shut, mouth opens and persuasion flows
Copiously forth. "What flesh shall dare oppose
The king's command? The matter in debate
—How plain it is! Yourself shall arbitrate,
Determine. Since the duke affects to rate
His prize in you beyond all goods of earth,
Accounts as nought old gains of rank and birth,
Ancestral obligation, recent fame,
(We know his feats)—nay, ventures to disclaim
Our will and pleasure almost—by report—

Waives in your favour dukeliness, in short,—
We—('t is the king speaks)—who might forthwith stay
Such suicidal purpose, brush away
A bad example shame would else record,—
Lean to indulgence rather. At his word
We take the duke: allow him to complete
The cession of his dukedoms, leave our feet
Their footstool when his own head, safe in vault,
Sleeps sound. Nay, would the duke repair his fault
Handsomely, and our forfeited esteem
Recover,—what if wisely he redeem
The past,—in earnest of good faith, at once
Give us such jurisdiction for the nonce
As may suffice—prevent occasion slip—
And constitute our actual ownership?
Concede this—straightway be the marriage blessed
By warrant of this paper! Things at rest,
This paper duly signed, down drops the bar,
To-morrow you become—from what you are,
The druggist's daughter—not the duke's mere spouse,
But the king's own adopted: heart and house
Open to you—the idol of a court
'Which heaven might copy'—sing our poet-sort.
In this emergency, on you depends
The issue: plead what bliss the king intends!
Should the duke frown, should arguments and prayers,
Nay, tears if need be, prove in vain,—who cares?
We leave the duke to his obduracy,
Companionless,—you, madam, follow me
Without, where divers of the body-guard
Wait signal to enforce the king's award
Of strict seclusion: over you at least

Vibratingly the sceptre threats increased
Precipitation ! How avert its crash ?"

IX

" Re-enter, sir ! A hand that 's calm, not rash,
Averts it !" quietly the lady said.
"Yourself shall witness."
At the table's head
Where, mid the hushed guests, still the duke sat glued
In blank bewilderment, his spouse pursued
Her speech to end—syllabled quietude.

X

"Duke, I, your duchess of a day, could take
The hand you proffered me for love's sole sake,
Conscious my love matched yours ; as you, myself
Would waive, when need were, all but love—from pelf
To potency. What fortune brings about
Haply in some far future, finds me out,
Faces me on a sudden here and now.
The better ! Read—if beating heart allow—
Read this, and bid me rend to rags the shame !
I and your conscience—hear and grant our claim !
Never dare alienate God's gift you hold
Simply in trust for him ! Choose muck for gold ?
Could you so stumble in your choice, cajoled
By what I count my least of worthiness
—The youth, the beauty,—you renounce them —yes,
With all that 's most too : love as well you lose,
Slain by what slays in you the honour ! Choose !
Dear—yet my husband—dare I love you yet ?"

XI

How the duke's wrath o'erboiled,—words, words
and yet
More words,—I spare you such fool's fever-fret.
They were not of one sort at all, one size,
As souls go—he and she. 'T is said, the eyes
Of all the lookers-on let tears fall fast.
The minister was mollified at last:
"Take a day,—two days even, ere through pride
You perish,—two days' counsel—then decide!"

XII

—"If I shall save his honour and my soul?
Husband,—this one last time,—you tear the
scroll?
Farewell, duke! Sir, I follow in your train!"

XIII

So she went forth: they never met again
The duke and she. The world paid compliment
(Is it worth noting?) when, next day, she sent
Certain gifts back—"jewelry fit to deck
Whom you call wife." I know not round what neck
They took to sparkling, in good time—weeks
thence.

XIV

Of all which was the pleasant consequence,
So much and no more—that a fervid youth,
Big-hearted boy,—but ten years old, in truth,—
Laid this to heart and loved, as boyhood can,
The unduchessed lady: boy and lad grew man:
He loved as man perchance may: did meanwhile
Good soldier-service, managed to beguile
The years, no few, until he found a chance:

Then, as at trumpet-summons to advance,
Outbroke the love that stood at arms so long,
Brooked no withstanding longer. They were wed.
Whereon from camp and court alike he fled,
Renounced the sun-king, dropped off into night,
Evermore lost, a ruined satellite :
And, oh, the exquisite deliciousness
That lapped him in obscurity ! You guess
Such joy is fugitive : she died full soon.
He did his best to die—as sun, so moon
Left him, turned dusk to darkness absolute.
Failing of death—why, saintship seemed to suit :
Yes, your sort, Don ! He trembled on the verge
Of monkhood : trick of cowl and taste of scourge
He tried : then, kicked not at the pricks perverse,
But took again, for better or for worse,
The old way in the world, and, much the same
Man o' the outside, fairly played life's game.

XV

" Now, Saint Scholastica, what time she fared
In Paynimrie, behold, a lion glared
Right in her path ! Her waist she promptly strips
Of girdle, binds his teeth within his lips,
And, leashed all lamblike, to the Soldan's court
Leads him." Ay, many a legend of the sort
Do you praiseworthily authenticate :
Spare me the rest. This much of no debate
Admits : my lady flourished in grand days
When to be duchess was to dance the hays
Up, down, across the heaven amid its host :
While to be hailed the sun's own self almost—
So close the kinship—was—was—

Saint, for this,
Be yours the feet I stoop to—kneel and kiss !

So human? Then the mouth too, if you will!
Thanks to no legend but a chronicle.

XVI

One leans to like the duke, too: up we 'll patch
Some sort of saintship for him—not to match
Hers—but man's best and woman's worst amount
So nearly to the same thing, that we count
In man a miracle of faithfulness
If, while unfaithful somewhat, he lay stress
On the main fact that love, when love indeed,
Is wholly solely love from first to last—
Truth—all the rest a lie. Too likely, fast
Enough that necklace went to grace the throat
—Let 's say, of such a dancer as makes doat
The senses when the soul is satisfied—
Trogalia, say the Greeks—a sweetmeat tried
Approvingly by sated tongue and teeth,
Once body's proper meal consigned beneath
Such unconsidered munching.

XVII

Fancy's flight
Makes me a listener when, some sleepless night,
The duke reviewed his memories, and aghast
Found that the Present intercepts the Past
With such effect as when a cloud enwraps
The moon and, moon-suffused, plays moon perhaps
To who walks under, till comes, late or soon,
A stumble: up he looks, and lo, the moon
Calm, clear, convincingly herself once more!
How could he 'scape the cloud that thrust between
Him and effulgence? Speak, fool—duke, I mean!

PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

XVIII

"Who bade you come, brisk-marching bold she-shape,
A terror with those black-balled worlds of eyes,
That black hair bristling solid-built from nape
To crown it coils about? O dread surmise!
Take, tread on, trample under past escape
Your capture, spoil and trophy! Do—devise
Insults for one who, fallen once, ne'er shall rise!

"Mock on, triumphant o'er the prostrate shame!
Laugh 'Here lies he among the false to Love—
Love's loyal liegeman once: the very same
Who, scorning his weak fellows, towered above
Inconstancy: yet why his faith defame?
Our eagle's victor was at least no dove,
No dwarfish knight picked up our giant's glove—

"'When, putting prowess to the proof, faith urged
Her champion to the challenge: had it chanced
That merely virtue, wisdom, beauty—merged
All in one woman—merely these advanced
Their claim to conquest,—hardly had he purged
His mind of memories, dearnesses enhanced
Rather than harmed by death, nor, disentranced,

"'Promptly had he abjured the old pretence
To prove his kind's superior—first to last
Display erect on his heart's eminence
An altar to the never-dying Past.
For such feat faith might boast fit play of fence
And easily disarm the iconoclast
Called virtue, wisdom, beauty: impudence

"'Fought in their stead, and how could faith but fall?

There came a bold she-shape brisk-marching, bent
No inch of her imperious stature, tall
As some war-engine from whose top was sent
One shattering volley out of eye's black ball,
And prone lay faith's defender!' Mockery spent?
Malice discharged in full? In that event,

"My queenly impudence, I cover close,
I wrap me round with love of your black hair,
Black eyes, black every wicked inch of those
Limbs' war-tower tallness: so much truth lives there
'Neath the dead heap of lies. And yet—who knows?
What if such things are? No less, such things were.
Then was the man your match whom now you dare

"Treat as existent still. A second truth!
They held—this heap of lies you rightly scorn—
A man who had approved himself in youth
More than a match for—you? for sea-foam-born
Venus herself: you conquer him forsooth?
'T is me his ghost: he died since left and lorn,
As needs must Samson when his hair is shorn.

"Some day, and soon, be sure himself will rise,
Called into life by her who long ago
Left his soul whiling time in flesh-disguise.
Ghosts tired of waiting can play tricks, you know!
Tread, trample me—such sport we ghosts devise,
Waiting the morn-star's re-appearance—though
You think we vanish scared by the cock's crow."

WITH CHRISTOPHER SMART

I

It seems as if . . . or did the actual chance
Startle me and perplex? Let truth be said!
How might this happen? Dreaming, blindfold led
By visionary hand, did soul's advance
Precede my body's, gain inheritance
Of fact by fancy—so that when I read
At length with waking eyes your Song, instead
Of mere bewilderment, with me first glance
Was but full recognition that in trance
Or merely thought's adventure some old day
Of dim and done-with boyishness, or—well,
Why might it not have been, the miracle
Broke on me as I took my sober way
Through veritable regions of our earth
And made discovery, many a wondrous one?

II

Anyhow, fact or fancy, such its birth:
I was exploring some huge house, had gone
Through room and room complacently, no dearth
Anywhere of the signs of decent taste,
Adequate culture: wealth had run to waste
Nowise, nor penury was proved by stint:
All showed the Golden Mean without a hint
Of brave extravagance that breaks the rule.
The master of the mansion was no fool
Assuredly, no genius just as sure!
Safe mediocrity had scorned the lure

Of now too much and now too little cost,
And satisfied me sight was never lost
Of moderate design's accomplishment
In calm completeness. On and on I went,
With no more hope than fear of what came next,
Till lo, I push a door, sudden uplift
A hanging, enter, chance upon a shift
Indeed of scene! So—thus it is thou deck'st,
High heaven, our low earth's brick-and-mortar work?

III

It was the Chapel. That a star, from murk
Which hid, should flashingly emerge at last,
Were small surprise: but from broad day I passed
Into a presence that turned shine to shade.
There fronted me the Rafael Mother-Maid,
Never to whom knelt votarist in shrine
By Nature's bounty helped, by Art's divine
More varied—beauty with magnificence—
Than this: from floor to roof one evidence
Of how far earth may rival heaven. No niche
Where glory was not prisoned to enrich
Man's gaze with gold and gems, no space but glowed
With colour, gleamed with carving—hues which owed
Their outburst to a brush the painter fed
With rainbow-substance—rare shapes never wed
To actual flesh and blood, which, brain-born once,
Became the sculptor's dowry, Art's response
To earth's despair. And all seemed old yet new:
Youth,—in the marble's curve, the canvas' hue,
Apparent,—wanted not the crowning thrill
Of age the consecrator. Hands long still
Had worked here—could it be, what lent them skill

Retained a power to supervise, protect,
Enforce new lessons with the old, connect
Our life with theirs? No merely modern touch
Told me that here the artist, doing much,
Elsewhere did more, perchance does better, lives—
So needs must learn.

IV

Well, these provocatives
Having fulfilled their office, forth I went
Big with anticipation—well-nigh fear—
Of what next room and next for startled eyes
Might have in store, surprise beyond surprise.
Next room and next and next—what followed here?
Why, nothing! not one object to arrest
My passage—everywhere too manifest
The previous decent null and void of best
And worst, mere ordinary right and fit,
Calm commonplace which neither missed, nor hit
Inch-high, inch-low, the placid mark proposed.

V

Armed with this instance, have I diagnosed
Your case, my Christopher? The man was sound
And sane at starting: all at once the ground
Gave way beneath his step, a certain smoke
Curled up and caught him, or perhaps down broke
A fireball wrapping flesh and spirit both
In conflagration. Then—as heaven were loth
To linger—let earth understand too well
How heaven at need can operate—off fell
The flame-robe, and the untransfigured man
Resumed sobriety,—as he began,
So did he end nor alter pace, not he!

VI

Now, what I fain would know is—could it be
That he—whoe'er he was that furnished forth
The Chapel, making thus, from South to North,
Rafael touch Leighton, Michelagnolo
Join Watts, was found but once combining so
The elder and the younger, taking stand
On Art's supreme,—or that yourself who sang
A Song where flute-breath silvers trumpet-clang,
And stations you for once on either hand
With Milton and with Keats, empowered to claim
Affinity on just one point—(or blame
Or praise my judgment, thus it fronts you full)—
How came it you resume the void and null,
Subside to insignificance,—live, die
—Proved plainly two mere mortals who drew nigh
One moment—that, to Art's best hierarchy,
This, to the superhuman poet-pair?
What if, in one point only, then and there
The otherwise all-unapproachable
Allowed impingement? Does the sphere pretend
To span the cube's breadth, cover end to end
The plane with its embrace? No, surely! Still,
Contact is contact, sphere's touch no whit less
Than cube's superimposure. Such success
Befell Smart only out of throngs between
Milton and Keats that donned the singing-dress—
Smart, solely of such songmen, pierced the screen
'Twixt thing and word, lit language straight from soul,—
Left no fine film-flake on the naked coal
Live from the censer—shapely or uncouth,
Fire-suffused through and through, one blaze of truth
Undeadened by a lie,—(you have my mind)—

For, think! this blaze outleapt with black behind
And blank before, when Hayley and the rest . . .
But let the dead successors worst and best
Bury their dead: with life be my concern—
Yours with the fire-flame: what I fain would learn
Is just—(suppose me haply ignorant
Down to the common knowledge, doctors vaunt)
Just this—why only once the fire-flame was:
No matter if the marvel came to pass
The way folk judged—if power too long suppressed
Broke loose and maddened, as the vulgar guessed,
Or simply brain-disorder (doctors said)
A turmoil of the particles disturbed
Brain's workaday performance in your head,
Spurred spirit to wild action health had curbed:
And so verse issued in a cataract
Whence prose, before and after, unperturbed
Was wont to wend its way. Concede the fact
That here a poet was who always could—
Never before did—never after would—
Achieve the feat: how were such fact explained?

VII

Was it that when, by rarest chance, there fell
Disguise from Nature, so that Truth remained
Naked, and whoso saw for once could tell
Us others of her majesty and might
In large, her lovelinesses infinite
In little,—straight you used the power wherewith
Sense, penetrating as through rind to pith
Each object, thoroughly revealed might view
And comprehend the old things thus made new,
So that while eye saw, soul to tongue could trust
Thing which struck word out, and once more adjust
Real vision to right language, till heaven's vault

Pompous with sunset, storm-stirred sea's assault
On the swilled rock-ridge, earth's embosomed
brood
Of tree and flower and weed, with all the life
That flies or swims or crawls, in peace or strife,
Above, below,—each had its note and name
For Man to know by,—Man who, now—the same
As erst in Eden, needs that all he sees
Be named him ere he note by what degrees
Of strength and beauty to its end Design
Ever thus operates—(your thought and mine,
No matter for the many dissident)—
So did you sing your Song, so truth found vent
In words for once with you?

VIII

Then—back was furled
The robe thus thrown aside, and straight the world
Darkened into the old oft-catalogued
Repository of things that sky, wave, land,
Or show or hide, clear late, accretion-clogged
Now, just as long ago, by tellings and
Re-tellings to satiety, which strike
Muffled upon the ear's drum. Very like
None was so startled as yourself when friends
Came, hailed your fast-returning wits: "Health
mends
Importantly, for—to be plain with you—
This scribble on the wall was done—in lieu
Of pen and paper—with—ha, ha!—your key
Denting it on the wainscot! Do you see
How wise our caution was? Thus much we stopped
Of babble that had else grown print: and lopped
From your trim bay-tree this unsightly bough—
Smart's who translated Horace! Write us
now" . . .

Why, what Smart did write—never afterward
One line to show that he, who paced the sward,
Had reached the zenith from his madhouse cell.

IX

Was it because you judged (I know full well
You never had the fancy)—judged—as some—
That who makes poetry must reproduce
Thus ever and thus only, as they come,
Each strength, each beauty, everywhere diffuse
Throughout creation, so that eye and ear,
Seeing and hearing, straight shall recognise,
At touch of just a trait, the strength appear,—
Suggested by a line's lapse see arise
All evident the beauty,—fresh surprise
Startling at fresh achievement? "So, indeed,
Wallows the whale's bulk in the waste of brine,
Nor otherwise its feather-tufts make fine
Wild Virgin's Bower when stars faint off to seed!"
(My prose—your poetry I dare not give,
Purpling too much my mere grey argument.)
—Was it because you judged—when fugitive
Was glory found, and wholly gone and spent
Such power of startling up deaf ear, blind eye,
At truth's appearance,—that you humbly bent
The head and, bidding vivid work good-bye,
Doffed lyric dress and trod the world once more
A drab-clothed decent proseman as before?
Strengths, beauties, by one word's flash thus laid bare
—That was effectual service: made aware
Of strengths and beauties, Man but hears the text,
Awaits your teaching. Nature? What comes next?
Why all the strength and beauty?—to be shown

Thus in one word's flash, thenceforth let alone
By Man who needs must deal with aught that 's known
Never so lately and so little? Friend,
First give us knowledge, then appoint its use!
Strength, beauty are the means: ignore their end?
As well you stopped at proving how profuse
Stones, sticks, nay stubble lie to left and right
Ready to help the builder,—careless quite
If he should take, or leave the same to strew
Earth idly,—as by word's flash bring in view
Strength, beauty, then bid who beholds the same
Go on beholding. Why gains unemployed?
Nature was made to be by Man enjoyed
First; followed duly by enjoyment's fruit,
Instruction—haply leaving joy behind:
And you, the instructor, would you slack pursuit
Of the main prize, as poet help mankind
Just to enjoy, there leave them? Play the fool,
Abjuring a superior privilege?
Please simply when your function is to rule—
By thought incite to deed? From edge to edge
Of earth's round, strength and beauty everywhere
Pullulate—and must you particularize
All, each and every apparition? Spare
Yourself and us the trouble! Ears and eyes
Want so much strength and beauty, and no less
Nor more, to learn life's lesson by. Oh, yes—
The other method 's favoured in our day!
The end ere the beginning: as you may,
Master the heavens before you study earth,
Make you familiar with the meteor's birth
Ere you descend to scrutinize the rose!
I say, o'erstep no least one of the rows
That lead man from the bottom where he plants
Foot first of all, to life's last ladder-top:

Arrived there, vain enough will seem the vaunts
Of those who say—"We scale the skies, then drop
To earth—to find, how all things there are loth
To answer heavenly law: we understand
The meteor's course, and lo, the rose's growth—
How other than should be by law's command!"
Would not you tell such—"Friends, beware lest fume
Offuscate sense: learn earth first ere presume
To teach heaven legislation. Law must be
Active in earth or nowhere: earth you see,—
Or there or not at all, Will, Power, and Love
Admit discovery,—as below, above
See next law's confirmation! But reverse
The order, where's the wonder things grow worse
Than, by the law your fancy formulates,
They should be? Cease from anger at the fates
Which thwart themselves so madly. Live and learn,
Not first learn and then live, is our concern."

WITH GEORGE BUBB DODINGTON

I

Ah, George Bubb Dodington Lord Melcombe,—
no,
Yours was the wrong way!—always understand,
Supposing that permissibly you planned
How statesmanship—your trade—in outward show
Might figure as inspired by simple zeal
For serving country, king, and commonweal,
(Though service tire to death the body, tease
The soul from out an o'ertasked patriot-drudge)
And yet should prove zeal's outward show agrees
In all respects—right reason being judge—
With inward care that, while the statesman spends
Body and soul thus freely for the sake
Of public good, his private welfare take
No harm by such devotedness. Intends
Scripture aught else—let captious folk inquire—
Which teaches "Labourers deserve their hire,
And who neglects his household bears the bell
Away of sinning from an infidel"?
Wiselier would fools that carp bestow a thought
How birds build nests; at outside, roughly wrought,
Twig knots with twig, loam plasters up each chink,
Leaving the inmate rudely lodged—you think?
Peep but inside! That specious rude-and-rough
Covers a domicile where downy fluff
Embeds the ease-deserving architect,
Who toiled and moiled not merely to effect
'Twixt sprig and spray a stop-gap in the teeth

Of wind and weather, guard what swung beneath
From upset only, but contrived himself
A snug interior, warm and soft and sleek.
Of what material? Oh, for that, you seek
How nature prompts each volatile! Thus—pelf
Smoothens the human mudlark's lodging, power
Demands some hardier wrappage to embrace
Robuster heart-beats: rock, not tree nor tower,
Contents the building eagle: rook shoves close
To brother rook on branch, while crow morose
Apart keeps balance perched on topmost bough.
No sort of bird but suits his taste somehow:
Nay, Darwin tells of such as love the bower—
His bower-birds opportunely yield us yet
The lacking instance when at loss to get
A feathered parallel to what we find
The secret motor of some mighty mind
That worked such wonders—all for vanity!
Worked them to haply figure in the eye
Of intimates as first of—doers' kind?
Actors', that work in earnest sportively,
Paid by a sourish smile. How says the Sage?
Birds born to strut prepare a platform-stage
With sparkling stones and speckled shells, all sorts
Of slimy rubbish, odds and ends and orts,
Whereon to pose and posture and engage
The priceless female simper.

II

I have gone
Thus into detail, George Bubb Dodington,
Lest, when I take you presently to task
For the wrong way of working, you should ask
"What fool conjectures that profession means
Performance? that who goes behind the scenes
Finds,—acting over,—still the soot-stuff screens

Othello's visage, still the self-same cloak's
Bugle-bright-blackness half reveals half chokes
Hamlet's emotion, as ten minutes since?"
No, each resumes his garb, stands—Moor or prince—
Decently draped: just so with statesmanship!
All outside show, in short, is sham—why wince?
Concede me—while our parley lasts! You trip
Afterwards—lay but this to heart! (there lurks
Somewhere in all of us a lump which irks
Somewhat the sprightliest-scheming brain that 's bent
On brave adventure, would but heart consent!)
—Here trip you, that—your aim allowed as right—
Your means thereto were wrong. Come, we, this night,
Profess one purpose, hold one principle,
Are at odds only as to—not the will
But way of winning solace for ourselves
—No matter if the ore for which zeal delves
Be gold or coprolite, while zeal's pretence
Is—we do good to men at—whose expense
But ours? who tire the body, tease the soul,
Simply that, running, we may reach fame's goal
And wreathe at last our brows with bay—the State's
Disinterested slaves, nay—please the Fates—
Saviours and nothing less: such lot has been!
Statesmanship triumphs pedestalled, serene,—
O happy consummation!—brought about
By managing with skill the rabble-rout
For which we labour (never mind the name—
People or populace, for praise or blame)
Making them understand—their heaven, their hell,
Their every hope and fear is ours as well.
Man's cause—what other can we have at heart?

Whence follows that the necessary part
High o'er Man's head we play,—and freelier breathe
Just that the multitude which gasps beneath
May reach the level where unstifled stand
Ourselves at vantage to put forth a hand,
Assist the prostrate public. 'T is by right
Merely of such pretence, we reach the height
Where storms abound, to brave—nay, court their stress,
Though all too well aware—of pomp the less,
Of peace the more! But who are we, to spurn
For peace' sake, duty 's pointing? Up, then—earn
Albeit no prize we may but martyrdom!
Now, such fit height to launch salvation from,
How get and gain? Since help must needs be craved
By would-be saviours of the else-unsaved,
How coax them to co-operate, lend a lift,
Kneel down and let us mount?

III

You say "Make shift
By sham—the harsh word: preach and teach, persuade
Somehow the Public—not despising aid
Of salutary artifice—we seek
Solely their good: our strength would raise the weak,
Our cultivated knowledge supplement
Their rudeness, rawness: why to us were lent
Ability except to come in use?
Who loves his kind must by all means induce
That kind to let his love play freely, press
In Man's behalf to full performance!"

IV

Yes—
Yes, George, we know!—whereat they hear, believe,
And bend the knee, and on the neck receive
Who fawned and cringed to purpose? Not so,
George!
Try simple falsehood on shrewd folk who forge
Lies of superior fashion day by day
And hour by hour? With craftsmen versed as they
What chance of competition when the tools
Only a novice wields? Are knaves such fools?
Disinterested patriots, spare your tongue
The tones thrice-silvery, cheek save smiles it flung
Pearl-like profuse to swine—a herd, whereof
No unit needs be taught, his neighbour's trough
Scarce holds for who but grunts and whines the
husks
Due to a wrinkled snout that shows sharp tusks.
No animal—much less our lordly Man—
Obeys its like: with strength all rule began,
The stoutest awes the pasture. Soon succeeds
Discrimination,—nicer power Man needs
To rule him than is bred of bone and thew:
Intelligence must move strength's self. This too
Lasts but its time: the multitude at length
Looks inside for intelligence and strength
And finds them here and there to pick and choose:
"All at your service, mine, see!" Ay, but who's
My George, at this late day, to make his boast
"In strength, intelligence, I rule the roast,
Beat, all and some, the ungraced who crowd your
ranks?"
"Oh, but I love, would lead you, gain your thanks
By unexampled yearning for Man's sake—
Passion that solely waits your help to take

Effect in action!" George, which one of us
But holds with his own heart communion thus:
"I am, if not of men the first and best,
Still—to receive enjoyment—properest:
Which since by force I cannot, nor by wit
Most likely—craft must serve in place of it.
Flatter, cajole! If so I bring within
My net the gains which wit and force should win,
What hinders?" 'T is a trick we know of old:
Try, George, some other of tricks manifold!
The multitude means mass and mixture—right!
Are mixtures simple, pray, or composite?
Dive into Man, your medley: see the waste!
Sloth-stifled genius, energy disgraced
By ignorance, high aims with sorry skill,
Will without means and means in want of will
—Sure we might fish, from out the mothers' sons
That welter thus, a dozen Dodingtons!
Why call up Dodington, and none beside,
To take his seat upon our backs and ride
As statesman conquering and to conquer? Well,
The last expedient, which must needs excel
Those old ones—this it is,—at any rate
To-day's conception thus I formulate:
As simple force has been replaced, just so
Must simple wit be: men have got to know
Such wit as what you boast is nowise held
The wonder once it was, but, paralleled
Too plentifully, counts not,—puts to shame
Modest possessors like yourself who claim,
By virtue of it merely, power and place
—Which means the sweets of office. Since our race
Teems with the like of you, some special gift,
Your very own, must coax our hands to lift,
And backs to bear you: is it just and right
To privilege your nature?

V

"State things quite
Other than so"—make answer! "I pretend
No such community with men. Perpend
My key to domination! Who would use
Man for his pleasure needs must introduce
The element that awes Man. Once for all,
His nature owns a Supernatural
In fact as well as phrase—which found must be
—Where, in this doubting age? Old mystery
Has served its turn—seen through and sent adrift
To nothingness: new wizard-craft makes shift
Nowadays shorn of help by robe and book,—
Otherwise, elsewhere, for success must look
Than chalked-ring, incantation-gibberish.
Somebody comes to conjure: that 's he? Pish!
He 's like the roomful of rapt gazers,—there 's
No sort of difference in the garb he wears
From ordinary dressing,—gesture, speech,
Deportment, just like those of all and each
That eye their master of the minute. Stay!
What of the something—call it how you may—
Uncanny in the—quack? That 's easy said!
Notice how the Professor turns no head
And yet takes cognizance of who accepts,
Denies, is puzzled as to the adept's
Supremacy, yields up or lies in wait
To trap the trickster! Doubtless, out of date
Are dealings with the devil: yet, the stir
Of mouth, its smile half smug half sinister,
Mock-modest boldness masked in diffidence,
What if the man have—who knows how or
whence?—
Confederate potency unguessed by us—
Prove no such cheat as he pretends?"

VI

Ay, thus
Had but my George played statesmanship's new
card
That carries all! "Since we"—avers the Bard—
"All of us have one human heart"—as good
As say—by all of us is understood
Right and wrong, true and false—in rough, at least,
We own a common conscience. God, man,
beast—
How should we qualify the statesman-shape
I fancy standing with our world agape?
Disguise, flee, fight against with tooth and nail
The outrageous designation! "Quack" men quail
Before? You see, a little year ago
They heard him thunder at the thing which, lo,
To-day he vaunts for unscathed, while what erst
Heaven-high he lauded, lies hell-low, accursed!
And yet where 's change? Who, awe-struck, cares
to point
Critical finger at a dubious joint
In armour, true *æs triplex*, breast and back
Binding about, defiant of attack,
An imperturbability that 's—well,
Or innocence or impudence—how tell
One from the other? Could ourselves broach lies,
Yet brave mankind with those unaltered eyes,
Those lips that keep the quietude of truth?
Dare we attempt the like? What quick uncouth
Disturbance of thy smug economy,
O coward visage! Straight would all descry
Back on the man's brow the boy's blush once more!
No: he goes deeper—could our sense explore—
Finds conscience beneath conscience such as ours.
Genius is not so rare,—prodigious powers—

Well, others boast such,—but a power like this
Mendacious intrepidity—*quid vis?*
Besides, imposture plays another game,
Admits of no diversion from its aim
Of captivating hearts, sets zeal a-flare
In every shape at every turn,—nowhere
Allows subsidence into ash. By stress
Of what does guile succeed but earnestness,
Earnest word, look and gesture? Touched with aught
But earnestness, the levity were fraught
With ruin to guile's film-work. Grave is guile;
Here no act wants its qualifying smile,
Its covert pleasantry to neutralize
The outward ardour. Can our chief despise
Even while most he seems to adulate?
As who should say "What though it be my fate
To deal with fools? Among the crowd must lurk
Some few with faculty to judge my work
Spite of its way which suits, they understand,
The crass majority:—the Sacred Band,
No duping them forsooth!" So tells a touch
Of subintelligential nod and wink—
Turning foes friends. Coarse flattery moves the gorge:
Mine were the mode to awe the many, George!
They guess you half despise them while most bent
On demonstrating that your sole intent
Strives for their service. Sneer at them? Yourself
'T is you disparage,—tricksy as an elf,
Scorning what most you strain to bring to pass,
Laughingly careless,—triply cased in brass,—
While pushing strenuous to the end in view.
What follows? Why, you formulate within
The vulgar headpiece this conception "Win
A master-mind to serve us needs we must,

One who, from motives we but take on trust,
Acts strangelier—haply wiselier than we know—
Stronglier, for certain. Did he say 'I throw
Aside my good for yours, in all I do
Care nothing for myself and all for you'—
We should both understand and disbelieve:
Said he 'Your good I laugh at in my sleeve,
My own it is I solely labour at,
Pretending yours the while'—that, even that
We, understanding well, give credence to,
And so will none of it. But here 't is through
Our recognition of his service, wage
Well earned by work, he mounts to such a stage
Above competitors as all save Bubb
Would agonize to keep. Yet,—here 's the rub—
So slightly does he hold by our esteem
Which solely fixed him fast there, that we seem
Mocked every minute to our face, by gibe
And jest—scorn insuppressive: what ascribe
The rashness to? Our pay and praise to boot—
Do these avail him to tread underfoot
Something inside us all and each, that stands
Somehow instead of somewhat which commands
'Lie not'? Folk fear to jeopardize their soul,
Stumble at times, walk straight upon the whole,—
That 's nature's simple instinct: what may be
The portent here, the influence such as we
Are strangers to?"—

VII

Exact the thing I call
Man's despot, just the Supernatural
Which, George, was wholly out of—far beyond
Your theory and practice. You had conned
But to reject the precept "To succeed
In gratifying selfishness and greed,

Asseverate such qualities exist
Nowise within yourself! then make acquist
By all means, with no sort of fear!" Alack,
That well-worn lie is obsolete! Fall back
On still a working pretext—"Hearth and Home,
The Altar, love of England, hate of Rome"—
That 's serviceable lying—that perchance
Had screened you decently: but 'ware advance
By one step more in perspicacity
Of these our dupes! At length they get to see
As through the earlier, this the latter plea—
And find the greed and selfishness at source!
Ventum est ad triarios: last resource
Should be to what but—exquisite disguise
Disguise-abjuring, truth that looks like lies,
Frankness so sure to meet with unbelief?
Say—you hold in contempt—not them in chief—
But first and foremost your own self! No use
In men but to make sport for you, induce
The puppets now to dance, now stand stock-still,
Now knock their heads together, at your will
For will's sake only—while each plays his part
Submissive: why? through terror at the heart:
"Can it be—this bold man, whose hand we saw
Openly pull the wires, obeys some law
Quite above Man's—nay, God's?" On face fall
they.
This was the secret missed, again I say,
Out of your power to grasp conception of,
Much less employ to purpose. Hence the scoff
That greets your very name: folk see but one
Fool more, as well as knave, in Dodington.

WITH FRANCIS FURINI

I

NAY, *that*, Furini, never I at least
Mean to believe! What man you were I know,
While you walked Tuscan earth, a painter-priest,
Something about two hundred years ago.
Priest—you did duty punctual as the sun
That rose and set above Saint Sano's church,
Blessing Mugello: of your flock not one
But showed a whiter fleece because of smirch,
Your kind hands wiped it clear from: were they poor?
Bounty broke bread apace,—did marriage lag
For just the want of moneys that ensure
Fit hearth-and-home provision?—straight your bag
Unplumped itself,—reached hearts by way of palms
Goodwill's shake had but tickled. All about
Mugello valley, felt some parish qualms
At worship offered in bare walls without
The comfort of a picture?—prompt such need
Our painter would supply, and throngs to see
Witnessed that goodness—no unholy greed
Of gain—had coaxed from Don Furini—he
Whom princes might in vain implore to toil
For worldly profit—such a masterpiece.
Brief—priest, you poured profuse God's wine and oil
Praiseworthily, I know: shall praising cease

FRANCIS FURINI

When, priestly vesture put aside, mere man,
You stand for judgment? Rather—what acclaim
—"Good son, good brother, friend in whom we scan
No fault nor flaw"—salutes Furini's name,
The loving as the liberal! Enough:
Only to ope a lily, though for sake
Of setting free its scent, disturbs the rough
Loose gold about its anther. I shall take
No blame in one more blazon, last of all—
Good painter were you: if in very deed
I styled you great—what modern art dares call
My word in question? Let who will take heed
Of what he seeks and misses in your brain
To balance that precision of the brush
Your hand could ply so deftly: all in vain
Strives poet's power for outlet when the push
Is lost upon a barred and bolted gate
Of painter's impotency. Agnolo—
Thine were alike the head and hand, by fate
Doubly endowed! Who boasts head only—woe
To hand's presumption should brush emulate
Fancy's free passage by the pen, and show
Thought wrecked and ruined where the inexpert
Foolhardy fingers half grasped, half let go
Film-wings the poet's pen arrests unhurt!
No—painter such as that miraculous
Michael, who deems you? But the ample gift
Of gracing walls else blank of this our house
Of life with imagery, one bright drift
Poured forth by pencil,—man and woman mere,
Glorified till half owned for gods,—the dear
Fleshly perfection of the human shape,—
This was apportioned you whereby to praise
Heaven and bless earth. Who clumsily essays,
By slighting painter's craft, to prove the ape

Of poet's pen-creation, just betrays
Two-fold ineptitude.

II

By such sure ways
Do I return, Furini, to my first
And central confidence—that he I proved
Good priest, good man, good painter, and rehearsed
Praise upon praise to show—not simply loved
For virtue, but for wisdom honoured too
Needs must Furini be,—it follows—who
Shall undertake to breed in me belief
That, on his death-bed, weakness played the thief
With wisdom, folly ousted reason quite?
List to the chronicler! With main and might—
So fame runs—did the poor soul beg his friends
To buy and burn his hand-work, make amends
For having reproduced therein—(Ah me!
Sighs fame—that 's friend Filippo)—nudity!
Yes, I assure you: he would paint—not men
Merely—a pardonable fault—but when
He had to deal with—oh, not mother Eve
Alone, permissibly in Paradise
Naked and unashamed,—but dared achieve
Dreadful distinction, at soul-safety's price
By also painting women—(why the need?)
Just as God made them: there, you have the truth!
Yes, rosed from top to toe in flush of youth,
One foot upon the moss-fringe, would some Nymph
Try, with its venturous fellow, if the lymph
Were chillier than the slab-stepped fountain-edge;
The while a-heap her garments on its ledge
Of boulder lay within hand's easy reach,
—No one least kid-skin cast around her! Speech
Shrinks from enumerating case and case
Of—were it but Diana at the chase,

With tunic tucked discreetly hunting-high !
No, some Queen Venus set our necks awry,
Turned faces from the painter's all-too-frank
Triumph of flesh ! For—whom had he to thank
—This self-appointed nature-student ? Whence
Picked he up practice ? By what evidence
Did he unhandsomely become adept
In simulating bodies ? How except
By actual sight of such ? Himself confessed
The enormity : quoth Philip "When I pressed
The painter to acknowledge his abuse
Of artistry else potent—what excuse
Made the infatuated man ? I give
His very words : 'Did you but know, as I,
—O scruple-splitting sickly-sensitive
Mild-moral-monger, what the agony
Of Art is ere Art satisfy herself
In imitating Nature—(Man, poor elf,
Striving to match the finger-mark of Him
The immeasurably matchless)—gay or grim,
Pray, would your smile be? Leavemere fools to tax
Art's high-strung brain's intentness as so lax
That, in its mid-throe, idle fancy sees
The moment for admittance !' Pleadings these—
Specious, I grant." So adds, and seems to wince
Somewhat, our censor—but shall truth convince
Blockheads like Baldinucci ?

III

I resume
My incredulity : your other kind
Of soul, Furini, never was so blind,
Even through death-mist, as to grope in gloom
For cheer beside a bonfire piled to turn
Ashes and dust all that your noble life
Did homage to life's Lord by,—bid them burn

—These Baldinucci blockheads—pictures rife
With record, in each rendered loveliness,
That one appreciative creature's debt
Of thanks to the Creator more or less,
Was paid according as heart's-will had met
Hand's-power in Art's endeavour to express
Heaven's most consummate of achievements, bless
Earth by a semblance of the seal God set
On woman his supremest work. I trust
Rather, Furini, dying breath had vent
In some fine fervour of thanksgiving just
For this—that soul and body's power you spent—
Agonized to adumbrate, trace in dust
That marvel which we dream the firmament
Copies in star-device when fancies stray
Outlining, orb by orb, Andromeda—
God's best of beauteous and magnificent
Revealed to earth—the naked female form.
Nay, I mistake not: wrath that 's but luke-warm
Would boil indeed were such a critic styled
Himself an artist: artist! Ossa piled
Topping Olympus—the absurd which crowns
The extravagant—whereat one laughs, not frowns.
Paints he? One bids the poor pretender take
His sorry self, a trouble and disgrace,
From out the sacred presence, void the place
Artists claim only. What—not merely wake
Our pity that suppressed concupiscence—
A satyr masked as matron—makes pretence
To the coarse blue-fly's instinct—can perceive
No better reason why she should exist—
—God's lily-limbed and blush-rose-bosomed Eve—
Than as a hot-bed for the sensualist

To fly-blow with his fancies, make pure stuff
Breed him back filth—this were not crime enough?
But further—fly to style itself—nay, more—
To steal among the sacred ones, crouch down
Though but to where their garments sweep the floor—
—Still catching some faint sparkle from the crown
Crowning transcendent Michael, Leonard,
Rafael,—to sit beside the feet of such,
Unspurned because unnoticed, then reward
Their toleration—mercy overmuch—
By stealing from the throne-step to the fools
Curious outside the gateway, all-agape
To learn by what procedure, in the schools
Of Art, a merest man in outward shape
May learn to be Correggio! Old and young,
These learners got their lesson: Art was just
A safety-screen—(Art, which Correggio's tongue
Calls "Virtue")—for a skulking vice: mere lust
Inspired the artist when his Night and Morn
Slept and awoke in marble on that edge
Of heaven above our awestruck earth: lust-born
His Eve low bending took the privilege
Of life from what our eyes saw—God's own palm
That put the flame forth—to the love and thanks
Of all creation save this recreant!

IV

Calm
Our phrase, Furini! Not the artist-ranks
Claim riddance of an interloper: no—
This Baldinucci did but grunt and sniff
Outside Art's pale—ay, grubbed, where pine-trees grow,
For pignuts only.

v

You the Sacred! If
Indeed on you has been bestowed the dower
Of Art in fulness, graced with head and hand,
Head—to look up not downwards, hand—of power
To make head's gain the portion of a world
Where else the uninstructed ones too sure
Would take all outside beauty—film that 's furled
About a star—for the star's self, endure
No guidance to the central glory,—nay,
(Sadder) might apprehend the film was fog,
Or (worst) wish all but vapour well away,
And sky's pure product thickened from earth's
bog—
Since so, nor seldom, have your worthiest failed
To trust their own soul's insight—why? except
For warning that the head of the adept
May too much prize the hand, work unassailed
By scruple of the better sense that finds
An orb within each halo, bids gross flesh
Free the fine spirit-pattern, nor enmesh
More than is meet a marvel custom blinds
Only the vulgar eye to. Now, less fear
That you, the foremost of Art's fellowship,
Will oft—will ever so offend! But—hip
And thigh—smite the Philistine! *You*—slunk
here—
Connived at, by too easy tolerance,
Not to scrape palette simply or squeeze brush,
But dub your very self an Artist? Tush—
You, of the daubings, is it, dare advance
This doctrine that the Artist-mind must needs
Own to affinity with yours—confess
Provocative acquaintance, more or less,
With each impurely-peevish worm that breeds
Inside your brain's receptacle?

VI

Enough.
Who owns "I dare not look on diadems
Without an itch to pick out, purloin gems
Others contentedly leave sparkling"—gruff
Answers the guard of the regalia: "Why—
Consciously kleptomaniac—thrust yourself
Where your illicit craving after pelf
Is tempted most—in the King's treasury?
Go elsewhere! Sort with thieves, if thus you feel—
When folk clean-handed simply recognize
Treasure whereof the mere sight satisfies—
But straight your fingers are on itch to steal!
Hence with you!"

Pray, Furini!

VII

"Bounteous God,
Deviser and Dispenser of all gifts
To soul through sense,—in Art the soul uplifts
Man's best of thanks! What but Thy measuring-rod
Meted forth heaven and earth? more intimate,
Thy very hands were busied with the task
Of making, in this human shape, a mask—
A match for that divine. Shall love abate
Man's wonder? Nowise! True—true—all too true—
No gift but, in the very plenitude
Of its perfection, goes maimed, misconstrued
By wickedness or weakness: still, some few
Have grace to see Thy purpose, strength to mar
Thy work by no admixture of their own,
—Limn truth not falsehood, bid us love alone
The type untampered with, the naked star!"

VIII

And, prayer done, painter—what if you should
preach?
Not as of old when playing pulpiteer
To simple-witted country folk, but here
In actual London try your powers of speech
On us the cultured, therefore sceptical—
What would you? For, suppose he has his word
In faith's behalf, no matter how absurd,
This painter-theologian? One and all
We lend an ear—nay, Science takes thereto—
Encourages the meanest who has racked
Nature until he gains from her some fact,
To state what truth is from his point of view,
Mere pin-point though it be: since many such
Conduce to make a whole, she bids our friend
Come forward unabashed and haply lend
His little life-experience to our much
Of modern knowledge. Since she so insists,
Up stands Furini.

IX

"Evolutionists!
At truth I glimpse from depths, you glance from
heights,
Our stations for discovery opposites,—
How should ensue agreement? I explain:
'T is the tip-top of things to which you strain
Your vision, until atoms, protoplasm,
And what and whence and how may be the spasm
Which sets all going, stop you: down perforce
Needs must your observation take its course,
Since there 's no moving upwards: link by link
You drop to where the atoms somehow think,
Feel, know themselves to be: the world 's begun,
Such as we recognize it. Have you done

Descending? Here 's ourself,—Man, known to-
day,
Duly evolved at last,—so far, you say,
The sum and seal of being's progress. Good!
Thus much at least is clearly understood—
Of power does Man possess no particle:
Of knowledge—just so much as shows that still
It ends in ignorance on every side:
But righteousness—ah, Man is deified
Thereby, for compensation! Make survey
Of Man's surroundings, try creation—nay,
Try emulation of the minimized
Minuteness fancy may conceive! Surprised
Reason becomes by two defeats for one—
Not only power at each phenomenon
Baffled, but knowledge also in default—
Asking what *is* minuteness—yonder vault
Speckled with suns, or this the millionth—thing,
How shall I call?—that on some insect's wing
Helps to make out in dyes the mimic star?
Weak, ignorant, accordingly we are:
What then? The worse for Nature! Where
began
Righteousness, moral sense except in Man?
True, he makes nothing, understands no whit:
Had the initiator-spasm seen fit
Thus doubly to endow him, none the worse
And much the better were the universe.
What does Man see or feel or apprehend
Here, there, and everywhere, but faults to mend,
Omissions to supply,—one wide disease
Of things that are, which Man at once would ease
Had will but power and knowledge? failing
both—
Things must take will for deed—Man, nowise loth,
Accepts pre-eminency: mere blind force—

Mere knowledge undirected in its course
By any care for what is made or marred
In either's operation—*these* award
The crown to? Rather let it deck thy brows,
Man, whom alone a righteousness endows
Would cure the wide world's ailing! Who disputes
Thy claim thereto? Had Spasm more attributes
Than power and knowledge in its gift, before
Man came to pass? The higher that we soar,
The less of moral sense like Man's we find:
No sign of such before,—what comes behind,
Who guesses? But until there crown our sight
The quite new—not the old mere infinite
Of changings,—some fresh kind of sun and moon,—
Then, not before, shall I expect a boon
Of intuition just as strange, which turns
Evil to good, and wrong to right, unlearns
All Man's experience learned since Man was he.
Accept in Man, advanced to this degree,
The Prime Mind, therefore! neither wise nor strong—
Whose fault? but were he both, then right, not wrong
As now, throughout the world were paramount
According to his will,—which I account
The qualifying faculty. He stands
Confessed supreme—the monarch whose commands
Could he enforce, how bettered were the world!
He 's at the height this moment—to be hurled
Next moment to the bottom by rebound
Of his own peal of laughter. All around
Ignorance wraps him,—whence and how and why
Things are,—yet cloud breaks and lets blink the sky

Just overhead, not elsewhere! What assures
His optics that the very blue which lures
Comes not of black outside it, doubly dense?
Ignorance overwraps his moral sense,
Winds him about, relaxing, as it wraps,
So much and no more than lets through perhaps
The murmured knowledge—'Ignorance exists.'

X

"I at the bottom, Evolutionists,
Advise beginning, rather. I profess
To know just one fact—my self-consciousness,—
'Twixt ignorance and ignorance enisled,—
Knowledge: before me was my Cause—that 's
styled
God: after, in due course succeeds the rest,—
All that my knowledge comprehends—at best—
At worst, conceives about in mild despair.
Light needs must touch on either darkness:
where?
Knowledge so far impinges on the Cause
Before me, that I know—by certain laws
Wholly unknown, whate'er I apprehend
Within, without me, had its rise: thus blend
I, and all things perceived, in one Effect.
How far can knowledge any ray project
On what comes after me—the universe?
Well, my attempt to make the cloud disperse
Begins—not from above but underneath:
I climb, you soar,—who soars soon loses breath
And sinks, who climbs keeps one foot firm on fact
Ere hazarding the next step: soul's first act
(Call consciousness the soul—some name we need)
Getting itself aware, through stuff decreed
Thereto (so call the body)—who has stept
So far, there let him stand, become adept

In body ere he shift his station thence
One single hair's breadth. Do I make pretence
To teach, myself unskilled in learning? Lo,
My life's work! Let my pictures prove I know
Somewhat of what this fleshly frame of ours
Or is or should be, how the soul empowers
The body to reveal its every mood
Of love and hate, pour forth its plenitude
Of passion. If my hand attained to give
Thus permanence to truth else fugitive,
Did not I also fix each fleeting grace
Of form and feature—save the beauteous face—
Arrest decay in transitory might
Of bone and muscle—cause the world to bless
For ever each transcendent nakedness
Of man and woman? Were such feats achieved
By sloth, or strenuous labour unrelieved,
—Yet lavished vainly? Ask that underground
(So may I speak) of all on surface found
Of flesh-perfection! Depths on depths to probe
Of all-inventive artifice, disrobe
Marvel at hiding under marvel, pluck
Veil after veil from Nature—were the luck
Ours to surprise the secret men so name,
That still eludes the searcher—all the same,
Repays his search with still fresh proof—'Externe,
Not inmost, is the Cause, fool! Look and learn!'
Thus teach my hundred pictures: firm and fast
There did I plant my first foot. And the next?
Nowhere! 'T was put forth and withdrawn, perplexed
At touch of what seemed stable and proved stuff
Such as the coloured clouds are: plain enough
There lay the outside universe: try Man—
My most immediate! and the dip began
From safe and solid into that profound

Of ignorance I tell you surges round
My rock-spit of self-knowledge. Well and ill,
Evil and good irreconcilable
Above, beneath, about my every side,—
How did this wild confusion far and wide
Tally with my experience when my stamp—
So far from stirring—struck out, each a lamp,
Spark after spark of truth from where I stood—
Pedestalled triumph? Evil there was good,
Want was the promise of supply, defect
Ensured completion,—where and when and how?
Leave that to the First Cause! Enough that now,
Here where I stand, this moment's me and mine,
Shows me what is, permits me to divine
What shall be. Wherefore? Nay, how otherwise?
Look at my pictures! What so glorifies
The body that the permeating soul
Finds there no particle elude control
Direct, or fail of duty,—most obscure
When most subservient? Did that Cause ensure
The soul such raptures as its fancy stings
Body to furnish when, uplift by wings
Of passion, here and now, it leaves the earth,
Loses itself above, where bliss has birth—
(Heaven, be the phrase)—did that same Cause
contrive
Such solace for the body, soul must dive
At drop of fancy's pinion, condescend
To bury both alike on earth, our friend
And fellow, where minutely exquisite
Low lie the pleasures, now and here—no herb
But hides its marvel, peace no doubts perturb
In each small mystery of insect life—
—Shall the soul's Cause thus gift the soul, yet
strife
Continue still of fears with hopes,—for why?

What if the Cause, whereof we now descry
So far the wonder-working, lack at last
Will, power, benevolence—a protoplast,
No consummator, sealing up the sum
Of all things,—past and present and to come
Perfection? No, I have no doubt at all!
There 's my amount of knowledge—great or small,
Sufficient for my needs: for see! advance
Its light now on that depth of ignorance
I shrank before from—yonder where the world
Lies wreck-strewn,—evil towering, prone good—
hurled
From pride of place, on every side. For me
(Patience, beseech you!) knowledge can but be
Of good by knowledge of good's opposite—
Evil,—since, to distinguish wrong from right,
Both must be known in each extreme, beside—
(Or what means knowledge—to aspire or bide
Content with half-attaining? Hardly so!)
Made to know on, know ever, I must know
All to be known at any halting-stage
Of my soul's progress, such as earth, where wage
War, just for soul's instruction, pain with joy,
Folly with wisdom, all that works annoy
With all that quiets and contents,—in brief,
Good strives with evil.

"Now then for relief,
Friends, of your patience kindly curbed so long.
'What?' snarl you, 'Is the fool's conceit thus
strong—
Must the whole outside world in soul and sense
Suffer, that he grow sage at its expense?'
By no means! 'T is by merest touch of toe
I try—not trench on—ignorance, just know—
And so keep steady footing: how you fare,

Caught in the whirlpool—that 's the Cause's care,
Strong, wise, good,—this I know at any rate
In my own self,—but how may operate
With you—strength, wisdom, goodness—no least blink
Of knowledge breaks the darkness round me. Think!
Could I see plain, be somehow certified
All was illusion,—evil far and wide
Was good disguised,—why, out with one huge wipe
Goes knowledge from me. Type needs antitype:
As night needs day, as shine needs shade, so good
Needs evil: how were pity understood
Unless by pain? Make evident that pain
Permissibly masks pleasure—you abstain
From outstretch of the finger-tip that saves
A drowning fly. Who proffers help of hand
To weak Andromeda exposed on strand
At mercy of the monster? Were all true,
Help were not wanting: 'But 't is false,' cry you,
'Mere fancy-work of paint and brush!' No less,
Were mine the skill, the magic, to impress
Beholders with a confidence they saw
Life,—veritable flesh and blood in awe
Of just as true a sea-beast,—would they stare
Simply as now, or cry out, curse and swear,
Or call the gods to help, or catch up stick
And stone, according as their hearts were quick
Or sluggish? Well, some old artificer
Could do as much,—at least, so books aver,—
Able to make-believe, while I, poor wight,
Make-fancy, nothing more. Though wrong were right,
Could we but know—still wrong must needs seem wrong
To do right's service, prove men weak or strong,

Choosers of evil or of good. 'No such
Illusion possible!' Ah, friends, you touch
Just here my solid standing-place amid
The wash and welter, whence all doubts are bid
Back to the ledge they break against in foam,
Futility: my soul, and my soul's home
This body,—how each operates on each,
And how things outside, fact or feigning, teach
What good is and what evil,—just the same,
Be feigning or be fact the teacher,—blame
Diffidence nowise if, from this I judge
My point of vantage, not an inch I budge.
All—for myself—seems ordered wise and well
Inside it,—what reigns outside, who can tell?
Contrariwise, who needs be told 'The space
Which yields thee knowledge,—do its bounds
embrace
Well-willing and wise-working, each at height?
Enough: beyond thee lies the infinite—
Back to thy circumscription!'

"Back indeed!
Ending where I began—thus: retrocede,
Who will,—what comes first, take first, I advise!
Acquaint you with the body ere your eyes
Look upward: this Andromeda of mine—
Gaze on the beauty, Art hangs out for sign
There 's finer entertainment underneath.
Learn how they ministrate to life and death—
Those incommensurably marvellous
Contrivances which furnish forth the house
Where soul has sway! Though Master keep aloof,
Signs of His presence multiply from roof
To basement of the building. Look around,
Learn thoroughly,—no fear that you confound
Master with messuage! He 's away, no doubt,

But what if, all at once, you come upon
A startling proof—not that the Master gone
Was present lately—but that something—whence
Light comes—has pushed Him into residence?
Was such the symbol's meaning,—old, uncouth—
That circle of the serpent, tail in mouth?
Only by looking low, ere looking high,
Comes penetration of the mystery."

XI

Thanks! After sermonizing, psalmody!
Now praise with pencil, Painter! Fools attaint
Your fame, forsooth, because its power inclines
To livelier colours, more attractive lines
Than suit some orthodox sad sickly saint
—Grey male emaciation, haply streaked
Carmine by scourgings—or they want, far worse—
Some self-scathed woman, framed to bless not curse
Nature that loved the form whereon hate wreaked
The wrongs you see. No, rather paint some full
Benignancy, the first and foremost boon
Of youth, health, strength,—show beauty's May,
ere June
Undo the bud's blush, leave a rose to cull
—No poppy, neither! yet less perfect-pure,
Divinely-precious with life's dew besprent.
Show saintliness that 's simply innocent
Of guessing sinnership exists to cure.
All in good time! In time let age advance
And teach that knowledge helps—not ignorance—
The healing of the nations. Let my spark
Quicken your tinder! Burn with—Joan of Arc!
Not at the end, nor midway when there grew
The brave delusions, when rare fancies flew
Before the eyes, and in the ears of her
Strange voices woke imperiously astir:

No,—paint the peasant girl all peasant-like,
Spirit and flesh—the hour about to strike
When this should be transfigured, that inflamed,
By heart's admonishing "Thy country shamed,
Thy king shut out of all his realm except
One sorry corner!" and to life forth leapt
The indubitable lightning "Can there be
Country and king's salvation—all through me?"
Memorize that burst's moment, Francis! Tush—
None of the nonsense-writing! Fitlier brush
Shall clear off fancy's film-work and let show
Not what the foolish feign but the wise know—
Ask Sainte-Beuve else!—or better, Quicherat,
The downright-digger into truth that 's—Bah,
Bettered by fiction? Well, of fact thus much
Concerns you, that "of prudishness no touch
From first to last defaced the maid; anon,
Camp-use compelling"—what says D'Alençon
Her fast friend?—"though I saw while she undressed
How fair she was—especially her breast—
Never had I a wild thought!"—as indeed
I nowise doubt. Much less would she take heed—
When eve came, and the lake, the hills around
Were all one solitude and silence,—found
Barriered impenetrably safe about,—
Take heed of interloping eyes shut out,
But quietly permit the air imbibe
Her naked beauty till . . . but hear the scribe!
Now as she fain would bathe, one even-tide,
God's maid, this Joan, from the pool's edge she spied
The fair blue bird clowns call the Fisher-king:
And "'Las," sighed she, "my Liege is such a thing
As thou, lord but of one poor lonely place
Out of his whole wide France: were mine the grace
To set my Dauphin free as thou, blue bird!"

Properly Martin-fisher—that 's the word,
Not yours nor mine : folk said the rustic oath
In common use with her was—"By my troth"?
No,—"By my Martin"! Paint this! Only, turn
Her face away—that face about to burn
Into an angel's when the time is ripe!
That task 's beyond you. Finished, Francis?
Wipe
Pencil, scrape palette, and retire content!
"*Omnia non omnibus*"—no harm is meant!

WITH GERARD DE LAIRESSE

I

Ah, but—because you were struck blind, could bless
Your sense no longer with the actual view
Of man and woman, those fair forms you drew
In happier days so duteously and true,—
Must I account my Gerard de Lairesse
All sorrow-smitten? He was hindered too
—Was this no hardship?—from producing, plain
To us who still have eyes, the pageantry
Which passed and passed before his busy brain
And, captured on his canvas, showed our sky
Traversed by flying shapes, earth stocked with brood
Of monsters,—centaurs bestial, satyrs lewd,—
Not without much Olympian glory, shapes
Of god and goddess in their gay escapes
From the severe serene: or haply paced
The antique ways, god-counselled, nymph-embraced,
Some early human kingly personage.
Such wonders of the teeming poet's-age
Were still to be: nay, these indeed began—
Are not the pictures extant?—till the ban
Of blindness struck both palette from his thumb
And pencil from his finger.

II

Blind—not dumb,
Else, Gerard, were my inmost bowels stirred
With pity beyond pity: no, the word

Was left upon your unmolested lips :
Your mouth unsealed, despite of eyes' eclipse,
Talked all brain's yearning into birth. I lack
Somehow the heart to wish your practice back
Which boasted hand's achievement in a score
Of veritable pictures, less or more,
Still to be seen : myself have seen them,—moved
To pay due homage to the man I loved
Because of that prodigious book he wrote
On Artistry's Ideal, by taking note,
Making acquaintance with his artist-work.
So my youth's piety obtained success
Of all-too dubious sort : for, though it irk
To tell the issue, few or none would guess
From extant lines and colours, De Lairesse,
Your faculty, although each deftly-grouped
And aptly-ordered figure-piece was judged
Worthy a prince's purchase in its day.
Bearded experience bears not to be duped
Like boyish fancy : 't was a boy that budged
No foot's breadth from your visioned steps away
The while that memorable "Walk" he trudged
In your companionship,—the Book must say
Where, when and whither,—"Walk," come what
come may,
No measurer of steps on this our globe
Shall ever match for marvels. Faustus' robe,
And Fortunatus' cap were gifts of price :
But—oh, your piece of sober sound advice
That artists should descry abundant worth
In trivial commonplace, nor groan at dearth
If fortune bade the painter's craft be plied
In vulgar town and country ! Why despond
Because hemmed round by Dutch canals ? Be-
yond
The ugly actual, lo, on every side

Imagination's limitless domain
Displayed a wealth of wondrous sounds and sights
Ripe to be realized by poet's brain
Acting on painter's brush! "Ye doubt? Poor wights,
What if I set example, go before,
While you come after, and we both explore
Holland turned Dreamland, taking care to note
Objects whereto my pupils may devote
Attention with advantage?"

III

So commenced
That "Walk" amid true wonders—none to you,
But huge to us ignobly common-sensed,
Purblind, while plain could proper optics view
In that old sepulchre by lightning split,
Whereof the lid bore carven,—any dolt
Imagines why,—Jove's very thunderbolt:
You who could straight perceive, by glance at it,
This tomb must needs be Phaeton's! In a trice,
Confirming that conjecture, close on hand,
Behold, half out, half in the ploughed-up sand,
A chariot-wheel explained its bolt-device:
What other than the Chariot of the Sun
Ever let drop the like? Consult the tome—[1]
I bid inglorious tarriers-at-home—
For greater still surprise the while that "Walk"
Went on and on, to end as it begun,
Choke-full of chances, changes, every one
No whit less wondrous. What was there to baulk
Us, who had eyes, from seeing? You with none
Missed not a marvel: wherefore? Let us talk.

[1] *The Art of Painting*, &c., by Gerard de Lairesse. Translated by J. F. Fritsch. 1778.

IV

Say am I right? Your sealed sense moved your mind,
Free from obstruction, to compassionate
Art's power left powerless, and supply the blind
With fancies worth all facts denied by fate.
Mind could invent things, add to—take away,
At pleasure, leave out trifles mean and base
Which vex the sight that cannot say them nay
But, where mind plays the master, have no place.
And bent on banishing was mind, be sure,
All except beauty from its mustered tribe
Of objects apparitional which lure
Painter to show and poet to describe—
That imagery of the antique song
Truer than truth's self. Fancy's rainbow-birth
Conceived mid clouds in Greece, could glance along
Your passage o'er Dutch veritable earth,
As with ourselves, who see, familiar throng
About our pacings men and women worth
Nowise a glance—so poets apprehend—
Since nought avails portraying them in verse:
While painters turn upon the heel, intend
To spare their work the critic's ready curse
Due to the daily and undignified.

V

I who myself contentedly abide
Awake, nor want the wings of dream,—who tramp
Earth's common surface, rough, smooth, dry or
damp,
—I understand alternatives, no less
—Conceive your soul's leap, Gerard de Lairesse!
How were it could I mingle false with true,
Boast, with the sights I see, your vision too?
Advantage would it prove or detriment

If I saw double? Could I gaze intent
On Dryope plucking the blossoms red,
As you, whereat her lote-tree writhed and bled,
Yet lose no gain, no hard fast wide-awake
Having and holding nature for the sake
Of nature only—nymph and lote-tree thus
Gained by the loss of fruit not fabulous,
Apple of English homesteads, where I see
Nor seek more than crisp buds a struggling bee
Uncrumples, caught by sweet he clambers through?
Truly, a moot point: make it plain to me,
Who, bee-like, sate sense with the simply true,
Nor seek to heighten that sufficiency
By help of feignings proper to the page—
Earth's surface-blank whereon the elder age
Put colour, poetizing—poured rich life
On what were else a dead ground—nothingness—
Until the solitary world grew rife
With Joves and Junos, nymphs and satyrs. Yes,
The reason was, fancy composed the strife
'Twixt sense and soul: for sense, my De Lairesse,
Cannot content itself with outward things,
Mere beauty: soul must needs know whence
there springs—
How, when and why—what sense but loves, nor
lists
To know at all.

VI

Not one of man's acquists
Ought he resignedly to lose, methinks:
So, point me out which was it of the links
Snapt first, from out the chain which used to bind
Our earth to heaven, and yet for you, since blind,
Subsisted still efficient and intact?
Oh, we can fancy too! but somehow fact

Has got to—say, not so much push aside
Fancy, as to declare its place supplied
By fact unseen but no less fact the same,
Which mind bids sense accept. Is mind to blame,
Or sense,—does that usurp, this abdicate?
First of all, as you "walked"—were it too late
For us to walk, if so we willed? Confess
We have the sober feet still, De Lairesse!
Why not the freakish brain too, that must needs
Supplement nature—not see flowers and weeds
Simply as such, but link with each and all
The ultimate perfection—what we call
Rightly enough the human shape divine?
The rose? No rose unless it disentwine
From Venus' wreath the while she bends to kiss
Her deathly love?

VII

Plain retrogression, this!
No, no: we poets go not back at all:
What you did we could do—from great to small
Sinking assuredly: if this world last
One moment longer when Man finds its Past
Exceed its Present—blame the Protoplast!
If we no longer see as you of old,
'T is we see deeper. Progress for the bold!
You saw the body, 't is the soul we see.
Try now! Bear witness while you walk with me,
I see as you: if we loose arms, stop pace,
'T is that you stand still, I conclude the race
Without your company. Come, walk once more
The "Walk": if I to-day as you of yore
See just like you the blind—then sight shall cry
—The whole long day quite gone through—victory!

PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

VIII

Thunders on thunders, doubling and redoubling
Doom o'er the mountain, while a sharp white fire
Now shone, now sheared its rusty herbage, troubling
Hardly the fir-boles, now discharged its ire
Full where some pine-tree's solitary spire
Crashed down, defiant to the last: till—lo,
The motive of the malice!—all a-glow,
Circled with flame there yawned a sudden rift
I' the rock-face, and I saw a form erect
Front and defy the outrage, while—as checked,
Chidden, beside him dauntless in the drift—
Cowered a heaped creature, wing and wing outspread
In deprecation o'er the crouching head
Still hungry for the feast foregone awhile.
O thou, of scorn's unconquerable smile,
Was it when this—Jove's feathered fury—slipped
Gore-glutted from the heart's core whence he ripped—
This eagle-hound—neither reproach nor prayer—
Baffled, in one more fierce attempt to tear
Fate's secret from thy safeguard,—was it then
That all these thunders rent earth, ruined air
To reach thee, pay thy patronage of men?
He thundered,—to withdraw, as beast to lair,
Before the triumph on thy pallid brow.
Gather the night again about thee now,
Hate on, love ever! Morn is breaking there—
The granite ridge pricks through the mist, turns gold
As wrong turns right. O laughters manifold
Of ocean's ripple at dull earth's despair!

IX

But morning's laugh sets all the crags alight
Above the baffled tempest : tree and tree
Stir themselves from the stupor of the night,
And every strangled branch resumes its right
To breathe, shakes loose dark's clinging dregs, waves free
In dripping glory. Prone the runnels plunge,
While earth, distent with moisture like a sponge,
Smokes up, and leaves each plant its gem to see,
Each grass-blade's glory-glitter. Had I known
The torrent now turned river ?—masterful
Making its rush o'er tumbled ravage—stone
And stub which barred the froths and foams : no bull
Ever broke bounds in formidable sport
More overwhelmingly, till lo, the spasm
Sets him to dare that last mad leap : report
Who may—his fortunes in the deathly chasm
That swallows him in silence ! Rather turn
Whither, upon the upland, pedestalled
Into the broad day-splendour, whom discern
These eyes but thee, supreme one, rightly called
Moon-maid in heaven above and, here below,
Earth's huntress-queen ? I note the garb succinct
Saving from smirch that purity of snow
From breast to knee—snow's self with just the tinct
Of the apple-blossom's heart-blush. Ah, the bow
Slack-strung her fingers grasp, where, ivory-linked
Horn curving blends with horn, a moonlike pair
Which mimic the brow's crescent sparkling so—
As if a star's live restless fragment winked
Proud yet repugnant, captive in such hair !
What hope along the hillside, what far bliss

Lets the crisp hair-plaits fall so low they kiss
Those lucid shoulders? Must a morn so blithe,
Needs have its sorrow when the twang and hiss
Tell that from out thy sheaf one shaft makes writhe
Its victim, thou unerring Artemis?
Why did the chamois stand so fair a mark
Arrested by the novel shape he dreamed
Was bred of liquid marble in the dark
Depths of the mountain's womb which ever teemed
With novel births of wonder? Not one spark
Of pity in that steel-grey glance which gleamed
At the poor hoof's protesting as it stamped
Idly the granite? Let me glide unseen
From thy proud presence: well mayst thou be queen
Of all those strange and sudden deaths which damped
So oft Love's torch and Hymen's taper lit
For happy marriage till the maidens paled
And perished on the temple-step, assailed
By—what except to envy must man's wit
Impute that sure implacable release
Of life from warmth and joy? But death means peace.

X

Noon is the conqueror,—not a spray, nor leaf,
Nor herb, nor blossom but has rendered up
Its morning dew: the valley seemed one cup
Of cloud-smoke, but the vapour's reign was brief,
Sun-smitten, see, it hangs—the filmy haze—
Grey-garmenting the herbless mountain-side,
To soothe the day's sharp glare: while far and wide
Above unclouded burns the sky, one blaze

With fierce immitigable blue, no bird
Ventures to spot by passage. E'en of peaks
Which still presume there, plain each pale point speaks
In wan transparency of waste incurred
By over-daring : far from me be such !
Deep in the hollow, rather, where combine
Tree, shrub and briar to roof with shade and cool
The remnant of some lily-strangled pool,
Edged round with mossy fringing soft and fine.
Smooth lie the bottom slabs, and overhead
Watch elder, bramble, rose, and service-tree
And one beneficent rich barberry
Jewelled all over with fruit-pendents red.
What have I seen ! O Satyr, well I know
How sad thy case, and what a world of woe
Was hid by the brown visage furry-framed
Only for mirth : who otherwise could think—
Marking thy mouth gape still on laughter's brink,
Thine eyes a-swim with merriment unnamed
But haply guessed at by their furtive wink ?
And all the while a heart was panting sick
Behind that shaggy bulwark of thy breast—
Passion it was that made those breath-bursts thick
I took for mirth subsiding into rest.
So, it was Lyda—she of all the train
Of forest-thridding nymphs,—'t was only she
Turned from thy rustic homage in disdain,
Saw but that poor uncouth outside of thee,
And, from her circling sisters, mocked a pain
Echo had pitied—whom Pan loved in vain—
For she was wishful to partake thy glee,
Mimic thy mirth—who loved her not again,
Savage for Lyda's sake. She crouches there—
Thy cruel beauty, slumberously laid

Supine on heaped-up beast-skins, unaware
Thy steps have traced her to the briery glade,
Thy greedy hands disclose the cradling lair,
Thy hot eyes reach and revel on the maid!

XI

Now, what should this be for? The sun's decline
Seems as he lingered lest he lose some act
Dread and decisive, some prodigious fact
Like thunder from the safe sky's sapphirine
About to alter earth's conditions, packed
With fate for nature's self that waits, aware
What mischief unsuspected in the air
Menaces momently a cataract.
Therefore it is that yonder space extends
Untrenched upon by any vagrant tree,
Shrub, weed well nigh; they keep their bounds, leave free
The platform for what actors? Foes or friends,
Here come they trooping silent: heaven suspends
Purpose the while they range themselves. I see!
Bent on a battle, two vast powers agree
This present and no after-contest ends
One or the other's grasp at rule in reach
Over the race of man—host fronting host,
As statue statue fronts—wrath-molten each,
Solidified by hate,—earth halved almost,
To close once more in chaos. Yet two shapes
Show prominent, each from the universe
Of minions round about him, that disperse
Like cloud-obstruction when a bolt escapes.
Who flames first? Macedonian, is it thou?
Ay, and who fronts thee, King Darius, drapes
His form with purple, fillet-folds his brow.

XII

What, then the long day dies at last? Abrupt
The sun that seemed, in stooping, sure to melt
Our mountain ridge, is mastered: black the belt
Of westward crags, his gold could not corrupt,
Barriers again the valley, lets the flow
Of lavish glory waste itself away
—Whither? For new climes, fresh eyes breaks
the day!
Night was not to be baffled. If the glow
Were all that 's gone from us! Did clouds, afloat
So filmily but now, discard no rose,
Sombre throughout the fleeciness that grows
A sullen uniformity. I note
Rather displeasure,—in the overspread
Change from the swim of gold to one pale lead
Oppressive to malevolence,—than late
Those amorous yearnings when the aggregate
Of cloudlets pressed that each and all might sate
Its passion and partake in relics red
Of day's bequeathment: now, a frown instead
Estranges, and affrights who needs must fare
On and on till his journey ends: but where?
Caucasus? Lost now in the night. Away
And far enough lies that Arcadia.
The human heroes tread the world's dark way
No longer. Yet I dimly see almost—
Yes, for my last adventure! 'T is a ghost.
So drops away the beauty! There he stands
Voiceless, scarce strives with deprecating hands.

XIII

Enough! Stop further fooling, De Lairesse!
My fault, not yours! Some fitter way express
Heart's satisfaction that the Past indeed
Is past, gives way before Life's best and last,

The all-including Future! What were life
Did soul stand still therein, forego her strife
Through the ambiguous Present to the goal
Of some all-reconciling Future? Soul,
Nothing has been which shall not bettered be
Hereafter,—leave the root, by law's decree
Whence springs the ultimate and perfect tree!
Busy thee with unearthing root? Nay, climb—
Quit trunk, branch, leaf and flower—reach, rest sublime
Where fruitage ripens in the blaze of day!
O'erlook, despise, forget, throw flower away,
Intent on progress? No whit more than stop
Ascent therewith to dally, screen the top
Sufficiency of yield by interposed
Twistwork bold foot gets free from. Wherefore glozed
The poets—"Dream afresh old godlike shapes,
Recapture ancient fable that escapes,
Push back reality, repeople earth
With vanished falseness, recognize no worth
In fact new-born unless 't is rendered back
Pallid by fancy, as the western rack
Of fading cloud bequeaths the lake some gleam
Of its gone glory!"

XIV

Let things be—not seem,
I counsel rather,—do, and nowise dream!
Earth's young significance is all to learn:
The dead Greek lore lies buried in the urn
Where who seeks fire finds ashes. Ghost, forsooth!
What was the best Greece babbled of as truth?
"A shade, a wretched nothing,—sad, thin, drear,
Cold, dark, it holds on to the lost loves here,

If hand have haply sprinkled o'er the dead
Three charitable dust-heaps, made mouth red
One moment by the sip of sacrifice :
Just so much comfort thaws the stubborn ice
Slow-thickening upward till it choke at length
The last faint flutter craving—not for strength,
Not beauty, not the riches and the rule
O'er men that made life life indeed." Sad school
Was Hades ! Gladly,—might the dead but slink
To life back,—to the dregs once more would drink
Each interloper, drain the humblest cup
Fate mixes for humanity.

XV

Cheer up,—
Be death with me, as with Achilles erst,
Of Man's calamities the last and worst :
Take it so ! By proved potency that still
Makes perfect, be assured, come what come will,
What once lives never dies—what here attains
To a beginning, has no end, still gains
And never loses aught : when, where, and how—
Lies in Law's lap. What 's death then? Even now
With so much knowledge is it hard to bear
Brief interposing ignorance? Is care
For a creation found at fault just there—
There where the heart breaks bond and outruns
time,
To reach, not follow what shall be?

XVI

Here 's rhyme
Such as one makes now,—say, when Spring repeats
That miracle the Greek Bard sadly greets :
"Spring for the tree and herb—no Spring for us!"
Let Spring come : why, a man salutes her thus :

Dance, yellows and whites and reds,—
Lead your gay orgy, leaves, stalks, heads
Astir with the wind in the tulip-beds!

There 's sunshine; scarcely a wind at all
Disturbs starved grass and daisies small
On a certain mound by a churchyard wall.

Daisies and grass be my heart's bedfellows
On the mound wind spares and sunshine mellows:
Dance you, reds and whites and yellows!

WITH CHARLES AVISON

I

How strange !—but, first of all, the little fact
Which led my fancy forth. This bitter morn
Showed me no object in the stretch forlorn
Of garden-ground beneath my window, backed
By yon worn wall wherefrom the creeper, tacked
To clothe its brickwork, hangs now, rent and racked
By five months' cruel winter,—showed no torn
And tattered ravage worse for eyes to see
Than just one ugly space of clearance, left
Bare even of the bones which used to be
Warm wrappage, safe embracement: this one cleft—
—O what a life and beauty filled it up
Startlingly, when methought the rude clay cup
Ran over with poured bright wine ! 'T was a bird
Breast-deep there, tugging at his prize, deterred
No whit by the fast-falling snow-flake: gain
Such prize my blackcap must by might and main—
The cloth-shred, still a-flutter from its nail
That fixed a spray once. Now, what told the tale
To thee,—no townsman but born orchard-thief,—
That here—surpassing moss-tuft, beard from sheaf
Of sun-scorched barley, horsehairs long and stout,
All proper country-pillage—here, no doubt,
Was just the scrap to steal should line thy nest
Superbly? Off he flew, his bill possessed
The booty sure to set his wife's each wing
Greenly a-quiver. How they climb and cling,

Hang parrot-wise to bough, these blackcaps! Strange
Seemed to a city-dweller that the finch
Should stray so far to forage: at a pinch,
Was not the fine wool's self within his range
—Filchings on every fence? But no: the need
Was of this rag of manufacture, spoiled
By art, and yet by nature near unsoiled,
New-suited to what scheming finch would breed
In comfort, this uncomfortable March.

II

Yet—by the first pink blossom on the larch!—
This was scarce stranger than that memory,—
In want of what should cheer the stay-at-home,
My soul,—must straight clap pinion, well nigh roam
A century back, nor once close plume, descry
The appropriate rag to plunder, till she pounced—
Pray, on what relic of a brain long still?
What old-world work proved forage for the bill
Of memory the far-flyer? "March" announced,
I verily believe, the dead and gone
Name of a music-maker: one of such
In England as did little or did much,
But, doing, had their day once. Avison!
Singly and solely for an air of thine,
Bold-stepping "March," foot stept to ere my hand
Could stretch an octave, I o'erlooked the band
Of majesties familiar, to decline
On thee—not too conspicuous on the list
Of worthies who by help of pipe or wire
Expressed in sound rough rage or soft desire—
Thou, whilom of Newcastle organist!

III

So much could one—well, thinnish air effect.
Am I ungrateful? for, your March, styled "Grand,"
Did veritably seem to grow, expand,
And greaten up to title as, unchecked,
Dream-marchers marched, kept marching, slow and sure,
In time, to tune, unchangeably the same,
From nowhere into nowhere,—out they came,
Onward they passed, and in they went. No lure
Of novel modulation pricked the flat
Forthright persisting melody,—no hint
That discord, sound asleep beneath the flint,
—Struck—might spring spark-like, claim due tit-for-tat,
Quenched in a concord. No! Yet, such the might
Of quietude's immutability,
That somehow coldness gathered warmth, well nigh
Quickened—which could not be!—grew burning-bright
With fife-shriek, cymbal-clash and trumpet-blare,
To drum-accentuation: pacing turned
Striding, and striding grew gigantic, spurned
At last the narrow space 'twixt earth and air,
So shook me back into my sober self.

IV

And where woke I? The March had set me down
There whence I plucked the measure, as his brown
Frayed flannel-bit my blackcap. Great John Relfe,
Master of mine, learned, redoubtable,
It little needed thy consummate skill
To fitly figure such a bass! The key
Was—should not memory play me false—well, C.

Ay, with the Greater Third, in Triple Time,
Three crotchets to a bar : no change, I grant,
Except from Tonic down to Dominant.
And yet—and yet—if I could put in rhyme
Themanner of that marching !—which had stopped
—I wonder, where?—but thatmy weakself dropped
From out the ranks, to rub eyes disentranced
And feel that, after all the way advanced,
Back must I foot it, I and my compeers,
Only to reach, across a hundred years,
The bandsman Avison whose little book
And large tune thus had led me the long way
(As late a rag my blackcap) from to-day
And to-day's music-manufacture,—Brahms,
Wagner, Dvorak, Liszt,—to where—trumpets,
shawms,
Show yourselves joyful !—Handel reigns—supreme ?
By no means ! Buononcini's work is theme
For fit laudation of the impartial few :
(We stand in England, mind you !) Fashion too
Favours Geminiani—of those choice
Concertos : nor there wants a certain voice
Raised in thy favour likewise, famed Pepusch
Dear to our great-grandfathers ! In a bush
Of Doctor's wig, they prized thee timing beats
While Greenwaytrilled "Alexis." Such were feats
Of music in thy day—dispute who list—
Avison, of Newcastle organist !

V

And here 's your music all alive once more—
As once it was alive, at least : just so
The figured worthies of a waxwork-show
Attest—such people, years and years ago,
Looked thus when outside death had life below,

—Could say "We are now," not "We were of yore,"
—"Feel how our pulses leap!" and not "Explore—
Explain why quietude has settled o'er
Surface once all-awork!" Ay, such a "Suite"
Roused heart to rapture, such a "Fugue" would catch
Soul heavenwards up, when time was: why attach
Blame to exhausted faultlessness, no match
For fresh achievement? Feat once—ever feat!
How can completion grow still more complete?
Hear Avison! He tenders evidence
That music in his day as much absorbed
Heart and soul then as Wagner's music now.
Perfect from centre to circumference—
Orbed to the full can be but fully orbed:
And yet—and yet—whence comes it that "O Thou"—
Sighed by the soul at eve to Hesperus—
Will not again take wing and fly away
(Since fatal Wagner fixed it fast for us)
In some unmodulated minor? Nay,
Even by Handel's help!

VI

I state it thus:
There is no truer truth obtainable
By Man than comes of music. "Soul"—(accept
A word which vaguely names what no adept
In word-use fits and fixes so that still
Thing shall not slip word's fetter and remain
Innominate as first, yet, free again,
Is no less recognized the absolute
Fact underlying that same other fact
Concerning which no cavil can dispute
Our nomenclature when we call it "Mind"—

Something not Matter)—"Soul," who seeks shall
find
Distinct beneath that something. You exact
An illustrative image? This may suit.

VII

We see a work: the worker works behind,
Invisible himself. Suppose his act
Be to o'erarch a gulf: he digs, transports,
Shapes and, through enginery—all sizes, sorts,
Lays stone by stone until a floor compact
Proves our bridged causeway. So works Mind
—by stress
Of faculty, with loose facts, more or less,
Builds up our solid knowledge: all the same,
Underneath rolls what Mind may hide not tame,
An element which works beyond our guess,
Soul, the unsounded sea—whose lift of surge,
Spite of all superstructure, lets emerge,
In flower and foam, Feeling from out the deeps
Mind arrogates no mastery upon—
Distinct indisputably. Has there gone
To dig up, drag forth, render smooth from rough
Mind's flooring,—operosity enough?
Still the successive labour of each inch,
Who lists may learn: from the last turn of winch
That let the polished slab-stone find its place,
To the first prod of pick-axe at the base
Of the unquarried mountain,—what was all
Mind's varied process except natural,
Nay, easy, even, to descry, describe,
After our fashion? "So worked Mind: its tribe
Of senses ministrant above, below,
Far, near, or now or haply long ago
Brought to pass knowledge." But Soul's sea,—
drawn whence,

Fed how, forced whither,—by what evidence
Of ebb and flow, that 's felt beneath the tread,
Soul has its course 'neath Mind's work overhead,—
Who tells of, tracks to source the founts of Soul?
Yet wherefore heaving sway and restless roll
This side and that, except to emulate
Stability above? To match and mate
Feeling with knowledge,—make as manifest
Soul's work as Mind's work, turbulence as rest,
Hates, loves, joys, woes, hopes, fears, that rise and sink
Ceaselessly, passion's transient flit and wink,
A ripple's tinting or a spume-sheet's spread
Whitening the wave,—to strike all this life dead,
Run mercury into a mould like lead,
And henceforth have the plain result to show—
How we Feel, hard and fast as what we Know—
This were the prize and is the puzzle!—which
Music essays to solve: and here 's the hitch
That baulks her of full triumph else to boast.

VIII

All Arts endeavour this, and she the most
Attains thereto, yet fails of touching: why?
Does Mind get Knowledge from Art's ministry?
What 's known once is known ever: Arts arrange,
Dissociate, re-distribute, interchange
Part with part, lengthen, broaden, high or deep
Construct their bravest,—still such pains produce
Change, not creation: simply what lay loose
At first lies firmly after, what design
Was faintly traced in hesitating line
Once on a time, grows firmly resolute
Henceforth and evermore. Now, could we shoot
Liquidity into a mould,—some way

Arrest Soul's evanescent moods, and keep
Unalterably still the forms that leap
To life for once by help of Art !—which yearns
To save its capture : Poetry discerns,
Painting is 'ware of passion's rise and fall,
Bursting, subsidence, intermixture—all
A-seethe within the gulf. Each Art a-strain
Would stay the apparition,—nor in vain :
The Poet's word-mesh, Painter's sure and swift
Colour-and-line-throw—proud the prize they lift !
Thus felt Man and thus looked Man,—passions caught
I' the midway swim of sea,—not much, if aught,
Of nether-brooding loves, hates, hopes and fears,
Enwombed past Art's disclosure. Fleet the years,
And still the Poet's page holds Helena
At gaze from topmost Troy—"But where are they,
My brothers, in the armament I name
Hero by hero ? Can it be that shame
For their lost sister holds them from the war ?"
—Knowing not they already slept afar
Each of them in his own dear native land.
Still on the Painter's fresco, from the hand
Of God takes Eve the life-spark whereunto
She trembles up from nothingness. Outdo
Both of them, Music ! Dredging deeper yet,
Drag into day,—by sound, thy master-net,—
The abysmal bottom-growth, ambiguous thing
Unbroken of a branch, palpitating
With limbs' play and life's semblance ! There it lies,
Marvel and mystery, of mysteries
And marvels, most to love and laud thee for !
Save it from chance and change we most abhor !

Give momentary feeling permanence,
So that thy capture hold, a century hence,
Truth's very heart of truth as, safe to-day,
The Painter's Eve, the Poet's Helena,
Still rapturously bend, afar still throw
The wistful gaze! Thanks, Homer, Angelo!
Could Music rescue thus from Soul's profound,
Give feeling immortality by sound,
Then were she queenliest of Arts! Alas—
As well expect the rainbow not to pass!
"Praise 'Radaminta'—love attains therein
To perfect utterance! Pity—what shall win
Thy secret like 'Rinaldo'?"—so men said:
Once all was perfume—now, the flower is dead—
They spied tints, sparks have left the spar! Love,
hate,
Joy, fear, survive,—alike importunate
As ever to go walk the world again,
Nor ghost-like pant for outlet all in vain
Till Music loose them, fit each filmily
With form enough to know and name it by
For any recognizer sure of ken
And sharp of ear, no grosser denizen
Of earth than needs be. Nor to such appeal
Is Music long obdurate: off they steal—
How gently, dawn-doomed phantoms! back come
they
Full-blooded with new crimson of broad day—
Passion made palpable once more. Ye look
Your last on Handel? Gaze your first on Gluck!
Why wistful search, O waning ones, the chart
Of stars for you while Haydn, while Mozart
Occupies heaven? These also, fanned to fire,
Flamboyant wholly,—so perfections tire,—
Whiten to wanness, till . . . let others note
The ever-new invasion!

IX

I devote
Rather my modicum of parts to use
What power may yet avail to re-infuse
(In fancy, please you !) sleep that looks like death
With momentary liveliness, lend breath
To make the torpor half inhale. O Relfe,
An all-unworthy pupil, from the shelf
Of thy laboratory, dares unstop
Bottle, ope box, extract thence pinch and drop
Of dusts and dews a many thou didst shrine
Each in its right receptacle, assign
To each its proper office, letter large
Label and label, then with solemn charge,
Reviewing learnedly the list complete
Of chemical reactives, from thy feet
Push down the same to me, attent below,
Power in abundance : armed wherewith I go
To play the enlivener. Bring good antique stuff !
Was it alight once ? Still lives spark enough
For breath to quicken, run the smouldering ash
Red right-through. What, "stone-dead" were
fools so rash
As style my Avison, because he lacked
Modern appliance, spread out phrase unracked
By modulations fit to make each hair
Stiffen upon his wig ? See there—and there !
I sprinkle my reactives, pitch broadcast
Discords and resolutions, turn aghast
Melody's easy-going, jostle law
With licence, modulate (no Bach in awe),
Change enharmonically (Hudl to thank),
And lo, upstart the flamelets,—what was blank
Turns scarlet, purple, crimson ! Straightway
scanned

By eyes that like new lustre—Love once more
Yearns through the Largo, Hatred as before
Rages in the Rubato : e'en thy March,
My Avison, which, sooth to say—(ne'er arch
Eyebrows in anger !)—timed in Georgian years
The step precise of British Grenadiers
To such a nicety,—if score I crowd,
If rhythm I break, if beats I vary,—tap
At bar's off-starting turns true thunder-clap,
Ever the pace augmented till—what 's here ?
Titanic striding towards Olympus !

x

Fear
No such irreverent innovation ! Still
Glide on, go rolling, water-like, at will—
Nay, were thy melody in monotone,
The due three-parts dispensed with !

xi

This alone
Comes of my tiresome talking : Music's throne
Seats somebody whom somebody unseats,
And whom in turn—by who knows what new feats
Of strength,—shall somebody as sure push down,
Consign him dispossessed of sceptre, crown,
And orb imperial—whereto ?—Never dream
That what once lived shall ever die ! They seem
Dead—do they ? lapsed things lost in limbo ?
Bring
Our life to kindle theirs, and straight each king
Starts, you shall see, stands up, from head to foot
No inch that is not Purcell ! Wherefore ? (Suit
Measure to subject, first—no marching on
Yet in thy bold C major, Avison,

As suited step a minute since : no : wait—
Into the minor key first modulate—
Gently with A, now—in the Lesser Third !)

XII

Of all the lamentable debts incurred
By Man through buying knowledge, this were worst :
That he should find his last gain prove his first
Was futile—merely nescience absolute,
Not knowledge in the bud which holds a fruit
Haply undreamed of in the soul's Spring-tide,
Pursed in the petals Summer opens wide,
And Autumn, withering, rounds to perfect ripe,—
Not this,—but ignorance, a blur to wipe
From human records, late it graced so much.
"Truth—this attainment? Ah, but such and such
Beliefs of yore seemed inexpugnable
When we attained them ! E'en as they, so will
This their successor have the due morn, noon,
Evening and night—just as an old-world tune
Wears out and drops away, until who hears
Smilingly questions—'This it was brought tears
Once to all eyes,—this roused heart's rapture once?'
So will it be with truth that, for the nonce,
Styles itself truth perennial : 'ware its wile !
Knowledge turns nescience,—foremost on the file,
Simply proves first of our delusions."

XIII

Now—
Blare it forth, bold C Major ! Lift thy brow,
Man, the immortal, that wast never fooled
With gifts no gifts at all, nor ridiculed—
Man knowing—he who nothing knew ! As Hope,

Fear, Joy, and Grief,—though ampler stretch and scope
They seek and find in novel rhythm, fresh phrase,—
Were equally existent in far days
Of Music's dim beginning—even so,
Truth was at full within thee long ago,
Alive as now it takes what latest shape
May startle thee by strangeness. Truths escape
Time's insufficient garniture: they fade,
They fall—those sheathings now grown sere, whose aid
Was infinite to truth they wrapped, saved fine
And free through March frost: May dews crystalline
Nourish truth merely,—does June boast the fruit
As—not new vesture merely but, to boot,
Novel creation? Soon shall fade and fall
Myth after myth—the husk-like lies I call
New truth's corolla-safeguard: Autumn comes,
So much the better!

XIV

Therefore—bang the drums,
Blow the trumps, Avison! March-motive? that 's
Truth which endures resetting. Sharps and flats,
Lavish at need, shall dance athwart thy score
When ophicleide and bombardon's uproar
Mate the approaching trample, even now
Big in the distance—or my ears deceive—
Of federated England, fitly weave
March-music for the Future!

XV

Or suppose
Back, and not forward, transformation goes?
Once more some sable-stoled procession—say,

From Little-ease to Tyburn—wends its way,
Out of the dungeon to the gallows-tree
Where heading, hacking, hanging is to be
Of half-a-dozen recusants—this day
Three hundred years ago! How duly drones
Elizabethan plain-song—dim antique
Grown clarion-clear the while I humbly wreak
A classic vengeance on thy March! It moans—
Larges and Longs and Breves displacing quite
Crotchet-and-quaver pertness—brushing bars
Aside and filling vacant sky with stars
Hidden till now that day returns to night.

XVI

Nor night nor day: one purpose move us both,
Be thy mood mine! As thou wast minded, Man's
The cause our music champions: I were loth
To think we cheered our troop to Preston Pans
Ignobly: back to times of England's best!
Parliament stands for privilege—life and limb
Guards Hollis, Haselrig, Strode, Hampden, Pym,
The famous Five. There 's rumour of arrest.
Bring up the Train Bands, Southwark! They
protest:
Shall we not all join chorus? Hark the hymn,
—Rough, rude, robustious—homely heart a-throb,
Harsh voice a-hallo, as beseems the mob!
How good is noise! what 's silence but despair
Of making sound match gladness never there?
Give me some great glad "subject," glorious Bach,
Where cannon-roar not organ-peal we lack!
Join in, give voice robustious rude and rough,—
Avison helps—so heart lend noise enough!

Fife, trump, drum, sound! and singers then,
Marching, say "Pym, the man of men!"

Up, heads, your proudest—out, throats, your
loudest—
"Somerset's Pym!"

Strafford from the block, Eliot from the den,
Foes, friends, shout "Pym, our citizen!"
Wail, the foes he quelled,—hail, the friends he
held,
"Tavistock's Pym!"

Hearts prompt heads, hands that ply the pen
Teach babes unborn the where and when
—Tyrants, he braved them,—patriots, he saved
them—
"Westminster's Pym!"

Lustily.

FUST AND HIS FRIENDS

AN EPILOGUE

Inside the House of Fust, Mayence, 1457

FIRST FRIEND

Up, up, up—next step of the staircase
Lands us, lo, at the chamber of dread!

SECOND FRIEND

Locked and barred?

THIRD FRIEND

Door open—the rare case!

FOURTH FRIEND

Ay, there he leans—lost wretch!

FIFTH FRIEND

His head
Sunk on his desk 'twixt his arms outspread!

SIXTH FRIEND

Hallo,—wake, man, ere God thunderstrike Mayence
—Mulct for thy sake who art Satan's, John Fust!
Satan installed here, God's rule in abeyance,
Mayence some morning may crumble to dust.
Answer our questions thou shalt and thou must!

SEVENTH FRIEND

Softly and fairly! Wherefore a-gloom?
Greet us, thy gossipry, cousin and sib!
Raise the forlorn brow, Fust! Make room—
Let daylight through arms which, enfolding thee, crib
From those clenched lids the comfort of sunshine!

FIRST FRIEND

So glib
Thy tongue slides to "comfort" already? Not mine!
Behoves us deal roundly: the wretch is distraught
—Too well I guess wherefore! Behoves a Divine
—Such as I, by grace, boast me—to threaten one caught
In the enemy's toils,—setting "comfort" at nought.

SECOND FRIEND

Nay, Brother, so hasty? I heard—nor long since—
Of a certain Black Artsman who,—helplessly bound
By rash pact with Satan,—through paying—why mince
The matter?—fit price to the Church,—safe and sound
Full a year after death in his grave-clothes was found.

Whereas 't is notorious the Fiend claims his due
During lifetime,—comes clawing, with talons aflame,
The soul from the flesh-rags left smoking and blue:
So it happed with John Faust; lest John Fust fare the same,—
Look up, I adjure thee by God's holy name!

AN EPILOGUE

For neighbours and friends—no foul hell-brood
flock we!
Saith Solomon "Words of the wise are as goads:"
Ours prick but to startle from torpor, set free
Soul and sense from death's drowse.

FIRST FRIEND

And soul, wakened, unloads
Much sin by confession: no mere palinodes!

—"I was youthful and wanton, am old yet no sage:
When angry I cursed, struck and slew: did I
want?
Right and left did I rob: though no war I dared
wage
With the Church (God forbid!)—harm her least
ministrant—
Still I outraged all else. Now that strength is
grown scant,

I am probity's self"—no such bleatings as these!
But avowal of guilt so enormous, it baulks
Tongue's telling. Yet penitence prompt may
appease
God's wrath at thy bond with the Devil who stalks
—Strides hither to strangle thee!

FUST

Childhood so talks.

Not rare wit nor ripe age—ye boast them, my
neighbours!—
Should lay such a charge on your townsman,
this Fust
Who, known for a life spent in pleasures and
labours
If freakish yet venial, could scarce be induced
To traffic with fiends.

FIRST FRIEND

So, my words have unloosed
A plie from those pale lips corrugate but now?

FUST

Lost count me, yet not as ye lean to surmise.

FIRST FRIEND

To surmise? to establish! Unbury that brow!
Look up, that thy judge may read clear in thine eyes!

SECOND FRIEND

By your leave, Brother Barnabite! Mine to advise!

—Who arraign thee, John Fust! What was bruited erewhile
Now bellows through Mayence. All cry—thou hast trucked
Salvation away for lust's solace! Thy smile
Takes its hue from hell's smoulder!

FUST

Too certain! I sucked
—Got drunk at the nipple of sense.

SECOND FRIEND

Thou hast ducked—

Art drowned there, say rather! Faugh—fleshly disport!
How else but by help of Sir Belial didst win
That Venus-like lady, no drudge of thy sort
Could lure to become his accomplice in sin?
Folk nicknamed her Helen of Troy!

AN EPILOGUE

FIRST FRIEND

Best begin
At the very beginning. Thy father,—all knew,
A mere goldsmith . . .

FUST

Who knew him, perchance may know this—
He dying left much gold and jewels no few:
Whom these help to court with but seldom shall miss
The love of a leman: true witchcraft, I wis!

FIRST FRIEND

Dost flout me? 'T is said, in debauchery's guild
Admitted prime guttler and guzzler—O swine!—
To honour thy headship, those tosspots so swilled
That out of their table there sprouted a vine
Whence each claimed a cluster, awaiting thy sign

To out knife, off mouthful: when—who could suppose
Such malice in magic?—each sot woke and found
Cold steel but an inch from the neighbour's red nose
He took for a grape-bunch!

FUST

Does that so astound
Sagacity such as ye boast,—who surround
Your mate with eyes staring, hairs standing erect
At his magical feats? Are good burghers unversed

In the humours of toping? Full oft, I suspect,
Ye, counting your fingers, call thumbkin their first,
And reckon a groat every guilder disbursed.

What marvel if wags, while the skinker fast brimmed
Their glass with rare tipple's enticement, should gloat
—Befooled and beflustered—through optics drink-dimmed—
On this draught and that, till each found in his throat
Our Rhenish smack rightly as Raphal? For, note—

They fancied—their fuddling deceived them so grossly—
That liquor sprang out of the table itself
Through gimlet-holes drilled there,—nor noticed how closely
The skinker kept plying my guests, from the shelf
O'er their heads, with the potable madness. No elf
Had need to persuade them a vine rose umbrageous,
Fruit-bearing, thirst-quenching! Enough! I confess
To many such fool-pranks, but none so outrageous
That Satan was called in to help me: excess
I own to, I grieve at—no more and no less.

SECOND FRIEND

Strange honours were heaped on thee—medal for breast,
Chain for neck, sword for thigh: not a lord of the land

But acknowledged thee peer! What ambition possessed
A goldsmith by trade, with craft's grime on his hand,
To seek such associates?

FUST

Spare taunts! Understand—

I submit me! Of vanities under the sun,
Pride seized me at last as concupiscence first,
Crapulosity ever: true Fiends, everyone,
Haled this way and that my poor soul: thus amerced—
Forgive and forget me!

FIRST FRIEND

Had flesh sinned the worst,

Yet help were in counsel: the Church could absolve:
But say not men truly thou barredst escape
By signing and sealing . . .

SECOND FRIEND

On me must devolve
The task of extracting . . .

FIRST FRIEND

Shall Barnabites ape
Us Dominican experts?

SEVENTH FRIEND

Nay, Masters,—agape

When Hell yawns for a soul, 't is myself claim the task
Of extracting, by just one plain question,
God's truth!

Where 's Peter Genesheim thy partner? I ask
Why, cloistered up still in thy room, the pale youth
Slaves tongue-tied—thy trade brooks no tattling forsooth!

No less he, thy *famulus*, suffers entrapping,
Succumbs to good fellowship: barrel a-broach
Runs freely nor needs any subsequent tapping:
Quoth Peter "That room, none but I dare approach,
Holds secrets will help me to ride in my coach."

He prattles, we profit: in brief, he assures
Thou hast taught him to speak so that all men may hear
—Each alike, wide world over, Jews, Pagans, Turks, Moors,
The same as we Christians—speech heard far and near
At one and the same magic moment!

FUST

That 's clear!

Said he—how?

SEVENTH FRIEND

Is it like he was licensed to learn?
Who doubts but thou dost this by aid of the Fiend?
Is it so? So it is, for thou smilest! Go, burn
To ashes, since such proves thy portion, unscreened
By bell, book and candle! Yet lately I weened

Balm yet was in Gilead,—some healing in store
For the friend of my bosom. Men said thou wast sunk

AN EPILOGUE

In a sudden despondency: not, as before,
  Fust gallant and gay with his pottle and punk,
But sober, sad, sick as one yesterday drunk!

FUST

Spare Fust, then, thus contrite!—who, youthful and healthy,
  Equipped for life's struggle with culture of mind,
Sound flesh and sane soul in coherence, born wealthy,
  Nay, wise—how he wasted endowment designed
For the glory of God and the good of mankind!
That much were misused such occasions of grace
  Ye well may upbraid him, who bows to the rod.
But this should bid anger to pity give place—
  He has turned from the wrong, in the right path to plod,
Makes amends to mankind and craves pardon of God.

Yea, friends, even now from my lips the "*Heureka*—
  Soul saved!" was nigh bursting—unduly elate!
Have I brought Man advantage, or hatched—so to speak—a
  Strange serpent, no cygnet? 'T is this I debate
Within me. Forbear, and leave Fust to his fate!

FIRST FRIEND

So abject, late lofty? Methinks I spy respite.
  Make clean breast, discover what mysteries hide
In thy room there!

SECOND FRIEND

Ay, out with them! Do Satan despite!
Remember what caused his undoing was pride!

FIRST FRIEND

Dumb devil! Remains one resource to be tried!

SECOND FRIEND

Exorcize!

SEVENTH FRIEND

Nay, first—is there any remembers
In substance that potent "*Ne pulvis*"—a psalm
Whereof some live spark haply lurks mid the embers
Which choke in my brain. Talk of "Gilead and balm"?
I mind me, sung half through, this gave such a qualm

To Asmodeus inside of a Hussite, that, queasy,
He broke forth in brimstone with curses. I 'm strong
In—at least the commencement: the rest should go easy,
Friends helping. "*Ne pulvis et ignis*" . . .

SIXTH FRIEND

All wrong!

FIFTH FRIEND

I 've conned till I captured the whole.

SEVENTH FRIEND

Get along!

"*Ne pulvis et cinis superbe te geras,*
Nam fulmina" . . .

AN EPILOGUE

SIXTH FRIEND

Fiddlestick! Peace, dolts and dorrs!
Thus runs it "*Ne Numinis fulmina feras*"—
Then "*Hominis perfidi justa sunt sors*
Fulmen et grando et horrida mors."

SEVENTH FRIEND

You blunder. "*Irati ne*" . . .

SIXTH FRIEND

Mind your own business!

FIFTH FRIEND

I do not so badly, who gained the monk's leave
To study an hour his choice parchment. A dizziness
May well have surprised me. No Christian dares thieve,
Or I scarce had returned him his treasure. These cleave:

"*Nos pulvis et cinis, trementes, gementes,*
Venimus"—some such word—"*ad te, Domine.*
Da lumen, juvamen, ut sancta sequentes
Cor . . . corda . . ." Plague take it!

SEVENTH FRIEND

—"*erecta sint spe:*"
Right text, ringing rhyme, and ripe Latin for me!

SIXTH FRIEND

A Canon's self wrote it me fair: I was tempted
To part with the sheepskin.

SEVENTH FRIEND

Didst grasp and let go
Such a godsend, thou Judas? My purse had been emptied
Ere part with the prize!

FUST

Do I dream? Say ye so?
Clouds break, then! Move, world! I have gained my "*Pou sto*"!

I am saved: Archimedes, salute me!

OMNES

Assistance!
Help, Angels! He summons . . . Aroint thee!—by name,
His familiar!

FUST

Approach!

OMNES

Devil, keep thy due distance!

FUST

Be tranquillized, townsmen! The knowledge ye claim
Behold, I prepare to impart. Praise or blame,—

Your blessing or banning, whatever betide me,
At last I accept. The slow travail of years,
The long-teeming brain's birth—applaud me, deride me,—
At last claims revealment. Wait!

AN EPILOGUE

SEVENTH FRIEND

Wait till appears
Uncaged Archimedes cooped-up there?

SECOND FRIEND

Who fears?

Here 's have at thee!

SEVENTH FRIEND

Correctly now! "*Pulvis et cinis*" . . .

FUST

The verse ye so value, it happens I hold
In my memory safe from *initium* to *finis*.
Word for word, I produce you the whole, plain enrolled,
Black letters, white paper—no scribe's red and gold!

OMNES

Aroint thee!

FUST

I go and return. [*He enters the inner room.*

FIRST FRIEND

Ay, 't is "*ibis*"
No doubt: but as boldly "*redibis*"—who 'll say?
I rather conjecture "*in Orco peribis!*"

SEVENTH FRIEND

Come, neighbours!

SIXTH FRIEND

I 'm with you! Show courage and stay
Hell's outbreak? Sirs, cowardice here wins the day!

FIFTH FRIEND

What luck had that student of Bamberg who ventured
To peep in the cell where a wizard of note
Was busy in getting some black deed debentured
By Satan? In dog's guise there sprang at his throat
A flame-breathing fury. Fust favours, I note,

An ugly huge lurcher!

SEVENTH FRIEND

If I placed reliance
As thou, on the beads thou art telling so fast,
I 'd risk just a peep through the keyhole.

SIXTH FRIEND

Appliance
Of ear might be safer. Five minutes are past.

OMNES

Saints, save us! The door is thrown open at last!

FUST (*re-enters, the door closing behind him*)

As I promised, behold I perform! Apprehend you
The object I offer is poison or pest?
Receive without harm from the hand I extend you
A gift that shall set every scruple at rest!
Shrink back from mere paper-strips? Try them and test!

Still hesitate? Myk, was it thou who lamentedst
Thy five wits clean failed thee to render aright
A poem read once and no more?—who repentedst
Vile pelf had induced thee to banish from sight
The characters none but our clerics indite?

Take and keep!

AN EPILOGUE

FIRST FRIEND

Blessed Mary and all Saints about her!

SECOND FRIEND

What imps deal so deftly,—five minutes suffice
To play thus the penman?

THIRD FRIEND

By Thomas the Doubter,
Five minutes, no more!

FOURTH FRIEND

Out on arts that entice
Such scribes to do homage!

FIFTH FRIEND

Stay! Once—and now twice—

Yea, a third time, my sharp eye completes the inspection
Of line after line, the whole series, and finds
Each letter join each—not a fault for detection!
Such upstrokes, such downstrokes, such strokes of all kinds
In the criss-cross, all perfect!

SIXTH FRIEND

There 's nobody minds

His quill-craft with more of a conscience, o'erscratches
A sheepskin more nimbly and surely with ink,
Than Paul the Sub-Prior: here 's paper that matches
His parchment with letter on letter, no link
Overleapt—underlost!

SEVENTH FRIEND

No erasure, I think—
No blot, I am certain!

FUST

Accept the new treasure!

SIXTH FRIEND

I remembered full half!

SEVENTH FRIEND

But who other than I
(Bear witness, bystanders!) when he broke the measure
Repaired fault with "*fulmen*"?

FUST

Put bickerings by!
Here 's for thee—thee—and thee, too: at need a supply [*distributing Proofs.*
For Mayence, though seventy times seven should muster!
How now? All so feeble of faith that no face
Which fronts me but whitens—or yellows, were juster?
Speak out lest I summon my Spirits!

OMNES

Grace—grace!
Call none of thy—helpmates! We'll answer apace!

My paper—and mine—and mine also—they vary
In nowise—agree in each tittle and jot!
Fust, how—why was this?

AN EPILOGUE

FUST

Shall such "*Cur*" miss a "*quare*"?
Within, there! Throw doors wide! Behold who complot
To abolish the scribe's work—blur, blunder and blot!

[*The doors open, and the Press is discovered in operation.*

Brave full-bodied birth of this brain that conceived thee
In splendour and music,—sustained the slow drag
Of the days stretched to years dim with doubt,—yet believed thee,
Had faith in thy first leap of life! Pulse might flag—
—Mine fluttered how faintly!—Arch-moment might lag

Its longest—I bided, made light of endurance,
Held hard by the hope of an advent which—dreamed,
Is done now: night yields to the dawn's reassurance:
I have thee—I hold thee—my fancy that seemed,
My fact that proves palpable! Ay, Sirs, I schemed

Completion that 's fact: see this Engine—be witness
Yourselves of its working! Nay, handle my Types!
Each block bears a Letter: in order and fitness
I range them. Turn, Peter, the winch! See, it gripes
What'sunder! Letloose—draw! Inregularstripes

Lies plain, at one pressure, your poem—touched, tinted,
Turned out to perfection! The sheet, late a blank,
Filled—ready for reading,—not written but PRINTED!
Omniscient omnipotent God, Thee I thank,
Thee ever, Thee only!—Thy creature that shrank

From no task Thou, Creator, imposedst! Creation
Revealed me no object, from insect to Man,
But bore Thy hand's impress: earth glowed with salvation:
"Hast sinned? Be thou saved, Fust! Continue my plan,
Who spake and earth was: with my word things began.

"As sound so went forth, to the sight be extended
Word's mission henceforward! The task I assign,
Embrace—thy allegiance to evil is ended!
Have cheer, soul impregnate with purpose! Combine
Soul and body, give birth to my concept—called thine!

"Far and wide, North and South, East and West, have dominion
O'er thought, winged wonder, O Word! Traverse world
In sun-flash and sphere-song! Each beat of thy pinion
Bursts night, beckons day: once Truth's banner unfurled,
Where 's Falsehood? Sun-smitten, to nothingness hurled!"

AN EPILOGUE

More humbly—so, friends, did my fault find redemption.
I sinned, soul-entoiled by the tether of sense:
My captor reigned master: I plead no exemption
From Satan's award to his servant: defence
From the fiery and final assault would be—whence?

By making—as man might—to truth restitution!
Truth is God: trample lies and lies' father, God's foe!
Fix fact fast: truths change by an hour's revolution:
What deed's very doer, unaided, can show
How 't was done a year—month—week—day—minute ago?

At best, he relates it—another reports it—
A third—nay, a thousandth records it: and still
Narration, tradition, no step but distorts it,
As down from truth's height it goes sliding until
At the low level lie-mark it stops—whence no skill
Of the scribe, intervening too tardily, rescues
—Once fallen—lost fact from lie's fate there. What scribe
—Eyes horny with poring, hands crippled with desk-use,
Brains fretted by fancies—the volatile tribe
That tease weary watchers—can boast that no bribe

Shuts eyes and frees hand and remits brain from toiling?
Truth gained—can we stay, at whatever the stage,

Truth a-slide,—save her snow from its ultimate soiling
In mire,—by some process, stamp promptly on page
Fact spoiled by pen's plodding, make truth heritage

Not merely of clerics, but poured out, full measure,
On clowns—every mortal endowed with a mind?
Read, gentle and simple! Let labour win leisure
At last to bid truth do all duty assigned,
Not pause at the noble but pass to the hind!

How bring to effect such swift sure simultaneous
Unlimited multiplication? How spread
By an arm-sweep a hand-throw—no helping extraneous—
Truth broadcast o'er Europe? "The goldsmith," I said,
"Graves limning on gold: why not letters on lead?"

So, Tuscan artificer, grudge not thy pardon
To me who played false, made a furtive descent,
Found the sly secret workshop,—thy genius kept guard on
Too slackly for once,—and surprised thee low-bent
O'er thy labour—some chalice thy tool would indent

With a certain free scroll-work framed round by a border
Of foliage and fruitage: no scratching so fine,
No shading so shy but, in ordered disorder,
Each flourish came clear,—unbewildered by shine,
On the gold, irretrievably right, lay each line.

AN EPILOGUE

How judge if thy hand worked thy will? By reviewing,
Revising again and again, piece by piece,
Tool's performance,—this way, as I watched.
'T was through glueing
A paper-like film-stuff—thin, smooth, void of crease,
On each cut of the graver: press hard! at release,

No mark on the plate, but the paper showed double:
His work might proceed: as he judged—space or speck
Up he filled, forth he flung—was relieved thus from trouble
Lest wrong—once—were right never more: what could check
Advancement, completion? Thus lay at my beck—

At my call—triumph likewise! "For," cried I,
"what hinders
That graving turns Printing? Stamp one word—not one
But fifty such, phœnix-like, spring from death's cinders,—
Since death is word's doom, clerics hide from the sun
As some churl closets up this rare chalice." Go, run

Thy race now, Fust's child! High, O Printing, and holy
Thy mission! These types, see, I chop and I change
Till the words, every letter, a pageful, not slowly
Yet surely lies fixed: last of all, I arrange
A paper beneath, stamp it, loosen it!

FUST AND HIS FRIENDS

FIRST FRIEND

Strange!

SECOND FRIEND

How simple exceedingly!

FUST

Bustle, my Schœffer!
Set type,—quick, Genesheim! Turn screw now!

THIRD FRIEND

Just that!

FOURTH FRIEND

And no such vast miracle!

FUST

"Plough with my heifer,
Ye find out my riddle," quoth Samson, and pat
He speaks to the purpose. Grapes squeezed in
the vat
Yield to sight and to taste what is simple—a liquid
Mere urchins may sip: but give time, let
ferment—
You 've wine, manhood's master! Well, "*rectius*
si quid
Novistis im-per-ti-te!" Wait the event,
Then weigh the result! But whate'er Thy intent,

O Thou, the one force in the whole variation
Of visible nature,—at work—do I doubt?—
From Thy first to our last, in perpetual creation—
A film hides us from Thee—'twixt inside and out,
A film, on this earth where Thou bringest about

AN EPILOGUE

New marvels, new forms of the glorious, the gracious,
We bow to, we bless for: no star bursts heaven's dome
But Thy finger impels it, no weed peeps audacious
Earth's clay-floor from out, but Thy finger makes room
For one world's-want the more in Thy Cosmos: presume

Shall Man, Microcosmos, to claim the conception
Of grandeur, of beauty, in thought, word or deed?
I toiled, but Thy light on my dubiousest step shone:
If I reach the glad goal, is it I who succeed
Who stumbled at starting tripped up by a reed,

Or Thou? Knowledge only and absolute, glory
As utter be Thine who concedest a spark
Of Thy spheric perfection to earth's transitory
Existences! Nothing that lives, but Thy mark
Gives law to—life's light: what is doomed to the dark?

Where 's ignorance? Answer, creation! What height,
What depth has escaped Thy commandment—to Know?
What birth in the ore-bed but answers aright
Thy sting at its heart which impels—bids "E'en so,
Not otherwise move or be motionless,—grow,

"Decline, disappear!" Is the plant in default
How to bud, when to branch forth? The bird and the beast

—Do they doubt if their safety be found in assault
Or escape? Worm or fly, of what atoms the least
But follows light's guidance,—will famish, not feast?

In such various degree, fly and worm, ore and plant,
All know, none is witless: around each, a wall
Encloses the portion, or ample or scant,
Of Knowledge: beyond which one hair's breadth, for all
Lies blank—not so much as a blackness—a pall

Some sense unimagined must penetrate: plain
Is only old licence to stand, walk or sit,
Move so far and so wide in the narrow domain
Allotted each nature for life's use: past it
How immensity spreads does he guess? Not a whit.

Does he care? Just as little. Without? No, within
Concerns him: he Knows. Man Ignores—thanks to Thee
Who madest him know, but—in knowing—begin
To know still new vastness of knowledge must be
Outside him—to enter, to traverse, in fee

Have and hold! "Oh, Man's ignorance!" hear the fool whine!
How were it, for better or worse, didst thou grunt
Contented with sapience—the lot of the swine
Who knows he was born for just truffles to hunt?—
Monks' Paradise—"*Semper sint res uti sunt!*"

No, Man's the prerogative—knowledge once gained—
To ignore,—find new knowledge to press for, to swerve

AN EPILOGUE

In pursuit of, no, not for a moment: attained—
  Why, onward through ignorance! Dare and deserve!
As still to its asymptote speedeth the curve,

So approximates Man—Thee, who, reachable not,
  Hast formed him to yearningly follow Thy whole
Sole and single omniscience!
                Such, friends, is my lot:
  I am back with the world: one more step to the goal
Thanks for reaching I render—Fust's help to Man's soul!

Mere mechanical help? So the hand gives a toss
  To the falcon,—aloft once, spread pinions and fly,
Beat air far and wide, up and down and across!
  My Press strains a-tremble: whose masterful eye
Will be first, in new regions, new truth to descry?

Give chase, soul! Be sure each new capture consigned
  To my Types will go forth to the world, like God's bread
—Miraculous food not for body but mind,
  Truth's manna! How say you? Put case that, instead
Of old leasing and lies, we superiorly fed

These Heretics, Hussites . . .

FIRST FRIEND

First answer my query!
If saved, art thou happy?

FUST

I was and I am.

FIRST FRIEND

Thy visage confirms it: how comes, then, that—
weary
And woe-begone late—was it show, was it sham?—
We found thee sunk thiswise?

SECOND FRIEND

—In need of the dram

From the flask which a provident neighbour might carry!

FUST

Ah, friends, the fresh triumph soon flickers, fast fades!
I hailed Word's dispersion: could heartleaps but tarry!
Through me does Print furnish Truth wings? The same aids
Cause Falsehood to range just as widely. What raids

On a region undreamed of does Printing enable
Truth's foe to effect! Printed leasing and lies
May speed to the world's farthest corner—gross fable
No less than pure fact—to impede, neutralize,
Abolish God's gift and Man's gain!

FIRST FRIEND

Dost surmise

What struck me at first blush? Our Beghards, Waldenses,
Jeronimites, Hussites—does one show his head,

AN EPILOGUE

Spout heresy now? Not a priest in his senses
Deigns answer mere speech, but piles faggots instead,
Refines as by fire, and, him silenced, all 's said.

Whereas if in future I pen an opuscule
Defying retort, as of old when rash tongues
Were easy to tame,—straight some knave of the Huss-School
Prints answer forsooth! Stop invisible lungs?
The barrel of blasphemy broached once, who bungs?

SECOND FRIEND

Does my sermon, next Easter, meet fitting acceptance?
Each captious disputative boy has his quirk
"*An cuique credendum sit?*" Well the Church kept "*ans*"
In order till Fust set his engine at work!
What trash will come flying from Jew, Moor and Turk

When, goosequill, thy reign o'er the world is abolished!
Goose—ominous name! With a goose woe began:
Quoth Huss—which means "goose" in his idiom unpolished—
"Ye burn now a Goose: there succeeds me a Swan
Ye shall find quench your fire!"

FUST

I foresee such a man.

ASOLANDO:

FANCIES AND FACTS

TO MRS. ARTHUR BRONSON

To WHOM *but you, dear Friend, should I dedicate verses—some few written, all of them supervised, in the comfort of your presence, and with yet another experience of the gracious hospitality now bestowed on me since so many a year,—adding a charm even to my residences at Venice, and leaving me little regret for the surprise and delight at my visits to Asolo in bygone days?*

I unite, you will see, the disconnected poems by a title-name popularly ascribed to the inventiveness of the ancient secretary of Queen Cornaro whose palace-tower still overlooks us: Asolare *—"to disport in the open air, amuse oneself at random." The objection that such a word nowhere occurs in the works of the Cardinal is hardly important—Bembo was too thorough a purist to conserve in print a term which in talk he might possibly toy with: but the word is more likely derived from a Spanish source. I use it for love of the place, and in requital of your pleasant assurance that an early poem of mine first attracted you thither—where and elsewhere, at La Mura as Cà Alvisi, may all happiness attend you!*

Gratefully and affectionately yours,

R. B.

ASOLO: *October* 15, 1889.

ASOLANDO:

FANCIES AND FACTS

PROLOGUE

"The Poet's age is sad: for why?
  In youth, the natural world could show
No common object but his eye
  At once involved with alien glow—
His own soul's iris-bow.

"And now a flower is just a flower:
  Man, bird, beast are but beast, bird, man—
Simply themselves, uncinct by dower
  Of dyes which, when life's day began,
Round each in glory ran."

Friend, did you need an optic glass,
  Which were your choice? A lens to drape
In ruby, emerald, chrysopras,
  Each object—or reveal its shape
Clear outlined, past escape,

The naked very thing?—so clear
  That, when you had the chance to gaze,
You found its inmost self appear
  Through outer seeming—truth ablaze,
Not falsehood's fancy-haze?

ASOLANDO: FANCIES AND FACTS

How many a year, my Asolo,
  Since—one step just from sea to land—
I found you, loved yet feared you so—
  For natural objects seemed to stand
Palpably fire-clothed! No—

No mastery of mine o'er these!
  Terror with beauty, like the Bush
Burning but unconsumed. Bend knees,
  Drop eyes to earthward! Language? Tush!
Silence 't is awe decrees.

And now? The lambent flame is—where?
  Lost from the naked world: earth, sky,
Hill, vale, tree, flower,—Italia's rare
  O'er-running beauty crowds the eye—
But flame? The Bush is bare.

Hill, vale, tree, flower—they stand distinct,
  Nature to know and name. What then?
A Voice spoke thence which straight unlinked
  Fancy from fact: see, all 's in ken:
Has once my eyelid winked?

No, for the purged ear apprehends
  Earth's import, not the eye late dazed:
The Voice said "Call my works thy friends!
  At Nature dost thou shrink amazed?
God is it who transcends."

ASOLO: *Sept.* 6, 1889.

ROSNY

Woe, he went galloping into the war,
Clara, Clara!
Let us two dream: shall he 'scape with a scar?
Scarcely disfigurement, rather a grace
Making for manhood which nowise we mar:
See, while I kiss it, the flush on his face—
Rosny, Rosny!

Light does he laugh: "With your love in my soul"—
(Clara, Clara!)
"How could I other than—sound, safe and whole—
Cleave who opposed me asunder, yet stand
Scatheless beside you, as, touching love's goal,
Who won the race kneels, craves reward at your hand—
Rosny, Rosny?"

Ay, but if certain who envied should see!
Clara, Clara,
Certain who simper: "The hero for me
Hardly of life were so chary as miss
Death—death and fame—that 's love's guerdon when She
Boasts, proud bereaved one, her choice fell on this
Rosny, Rosny!"

So,—go on dreaming,—he lies mid a heap
(Clara, Clara,)

Of the slain by his hand: what is death but a
sleep?
Dead, with my portrait displayed on his breast:
Love wrought his undoing: "No prudence could
keep
The love-maddened wretch from his fate."
That is best,
Rosny, Rosny!

DUBIETY

I WILL be happy if but for once :
  Only help me, Autumn weather,
Me and my cares to screen, ensconce
  In luxury's sofa-lap of leather !

Sleep ? Nay, comfort—with just a cloud
  Suffusing day too clear and bright :
Eve's essence, the single drop allowed
  To sully, like milk, Noon's water-white.

Let gauziness shade, not shroud,—adjust,
  Dim and not deaden,—somehow sheathe
Aught sharp in the rough world's busy thrust,
  If it reach me through dreaming's vapour-
    wreath.

Be life so, all things ever the same !
  For, what has disarmed the world ? Outside,
Quiet and peace : inside, nor blame
  Nor want, nor wish whate'er betide.

What is it like that has happened before ?
  A dream ? No dream, more real by much.
A vision ? But fanciful days of yore
  Brought many : mere musing seems not such.

Perhaps but a memory, after all !
  —Of what came once when a woman leant
To feel for my brow where her kiss might fall.
  Truth ever, truth only the excellent !

NOW

Out of your whole life give but a moment!
All of your life that has gone before,
All to come after it,—so you ignore
So you make perfect the present,—condense,
In a rapture of rage, for perfection's endowment,
Thought and feeling and soul and sense—
Merged in a moment which gives me at last
You around me for once, you beneath me, above
me—
Me—sure that despite of time future, time past,—
This tick of our life-time 's one moment you love
me!
How long such suspension may linger? Ah,
Sweet—
The moment eternal—just that and no more—
When ecstasy's utmost we clutch at the core
While cheeks burn, arms open, eyes shut and lips
meet!

HUMILITY

WHAT girl but, having gathered flowers,
Stript the beds and spoilt the bowers,
From the lapful light she carries
Drops a careless bud?—nor tarries
To regain the waif and stray:
"Store enough for home"—she 'll say.

So say I too: give your lover
Heaps of loving—under, over,
Whelm him—make the one the wealthy!
Am I all so poor who—stealthy
Work it was!—picked up what fell:
Not the worst bud—who can tell?

"So say the foolish!" Say the foolish so, Love?
"Flower she is, my rose"—or else "My very
swan is she"—
Or perhaps "Yon maid-moon, blessing earth
below, Love,
That art thou!"—to them, belike: no such vain
words from me.

"Hush, rose, blush! no balm like breath," I
chide it:
"Bend thy neck its best, swan,—hers the whiter
curve!"
Be the moon the moon: my Love I place beside
it:
What is she? Her human self,—no lower
word will serve.

SUMMUM BONUM

All the breath and the bloom of the year in the
bag of one bee:
All the wonder and wealth of the mine in the
heart of one gem:
In the core of one pearl all the shade and the
shine of the sea:
Breath and bloom, shade and shine,—wonder,
wealth, and—how far above them—
Truth, that 's brighter than gem,
Trust, that 's purer than pearl,—
Brightest truth, purest trust in the universe—all
were for me
In the kiss of one girl.

A PEARL, A GIRL

A SIMPLE ring with a single stone
To the vulgar eye no stone of price :
Whisper the right word, that alone—
Forth starts a sprite, like fire from ice,
And lo, you are lord (says an Eastern scroll)
Of heaven and earth, lord whole and sole
Through the power in a pearl.

A woman ('t is I this time that say)
With little the world counts worthy praise :
Utter the true word—out and away
Escapes her soul : I am wrapt in blaze,
Creation's lord, of heaven and earth
Lord whole and sole—by a minute's birth—
Through the love in a girl !

SPECULATIVE

OTHERS may need new life in Heaven—
  Man, Nature, Art—made new, assume!
Man with new mind old sense to leaven,
  Nature—new light to clear old gloom,
Art that breaks bounds, gets soaring-room.

I shall pray: "Fugitive as precious—
  Minutes which passed,—return, remain!
Let earth's old life once more enmesh us,
  You with old pleasure, me—old pain,
So we but meet nor part again!"

WHITE WITCHCRAFT

If you and I could change to beasts, what beast
should either be?
Shall you and I play Jove for once? Turn fox
then, I decree!
Shy wild sweet stealer of the grapes! Now do
your worst on me!

And thus you think to spite your friend—turned
loathsome? What, a toad?
So, all men shrink and shun me! Dear men,
pursue your road!
Leave but my crevice in the stone, a reptile's fit
abode!

Now say your worst, Canidia! "He 's loathsome,
I allow:
There may or may not lurk a pearl beneath his
puckered brow:
But see his eyes that follow mine—love lasts there
anyhow."

BAD DREAMS. I

Last night I saw you in my sleep :
And how your charm of face was changed !
I asked "Some love, some faith you keep ?"
You answered " Faith gone, love estranged."

Whereat I woke—a twofold bliss :
Waking was one, but next there came
This other : "Though I felt, for this,
My heart break, I loved on the same."

BAD DREAMS. II

You in the flesh and here—
  Your very self! Now, wait!
One word! May I hope or fear?
  Must I speak in love or hate?
Stay while I ruminate!

The fact and each circumstance
  Dare you disown? Not you!
That vast dome, that huge dance,
  And the gloom which overgrew
A—possibly festive crew!

For why should men dance at all—
  Why women—a crowd of both—
Unless they are gay? Strange ball—
  Hands and feet plighting troth,
Yet partners enforced and loth!

Of who danced there, no shape
  Did I recognize: thwart, perverse,
Each grasped each, past escape
  In a whirl or weary or worse:
Man's sneer met woman's curse,

While he and she toiled as if
  Their guardian set galley-slaves
To supple chained limbs grown stiff:
  Unmanacled trulls and knaves—
The lash for who misbehaves!

BAD DREAMS. II

And a gloom was, all the while,
  Deeper and deeper yet
O'ergrowing the rank and file
  Of that army of haters—set
To mimic love's fever-fret.

By the wall-side close I crept,
  Avoiding the livid maze,
And, safely so far, outstepped
  On a chamber—a chapel, says
My memory or betrays—

Closet-like, kept aloof
  From unseemly witnessing
What sport made floor and roof
  Of the Devil's palace ring
While his Damned amused their king.

Ay, for a low lamp burned,
  And a silence lay about
What I, in the midst, discerned
  Though dimly till, past doubt,
'T was a sort of throne stood out—

High seat with steps, at least:
  And the topmost step was filled
By—whom? What vestured priest?
  A stranger to me,—his guild,
His cult, unreconciled

To my knowledge how guild and cult
  Are clothed in this world of ours:
I pondered, but no result
  Came to—unless that Giaours
So worship the Lower Powers.

When suddenly who entered?
Who knelt—did you guess I saw?
Who—raising that face where centred
Allegiance to love and law
So lately—off-casting awe,

Down-treading reserve, away
Thrusting respect . . . but mine
Stands firm—firm still shall stay!
Ask Satan! for I decline
To tell—what I saw, in fine!

Yet here in the flesh you come—
Your same self, form and face,—
In the eyes, mirth still at home!
On the lips, that commonplace
Perfection of honest grace!

Yet your errand is—needs must be—
To palliate—well, explain,
Expurgate in some degree
Your soul of its ugly stain.
Oh, you—the good in grain—

How was it your white took tinge?
"A mere dream"—never object!
Sleep leaves a door on hinge
Whence soul, ere our flesh suspect,
Is off and away: detect

Her vagaries when loose, who can!
Be she pranksome, be she prude,
Disguise with the day began:
With the night—ah, what ensued
From draughts of a drink hell-brewed?

BAD DREAMS. II

Then She: "What a queer wild dream!
And perhaps the best fun is—
Myself had its fellow—I seem
Scarce awake from yet. 'T was this—
Shall I tell you? First, a kiss!

"For the fault was just your own,—
'T is myself expect apology:
You warned me to let alone
(Since our studies were mere philology)
That ticklish (you said) Anthology.

"So, I dreamed that I passed *exam*
Till a question posed me sore:
'Who translated this epigram
By—an author we best ignore?'
And I answered 'Hannah More'!"

BAD DREAMS. III

This was my dream: I saw a Forest
  Old as the earth, no track nor trace
Of unmade man. Thou, Soul, explorest—
  Though in a trembling rapture—space
Immeasurable! Shrubs, turned trees,
Trees that touch heaven, support its frieze
Studded with sun and moon and star:
While—oh, the enormous growths that bar
Mine eye from penetrating past
  Their tangled twine where lurks—nay, lives
Royally lone, some brute-type cast
  I' the rough, time cancels, man forgives.

On, Soul! I saw a lucid City
  Of architectural device
Every way perfect. Pause for pity,
  Lightning! nor leave a cicatrice
On those bright marbles, dome and spire,
Structures palatial,—streets which mire
Dares not defile, paved all too fine
For human footstep's smirch, not thine—
Proud solitary traverser,
  My Soul, of silent lengths of way—
With what ecstatic dread, aver,
  Lest life start sanctioned by thy stay!

Ah, but the last sight was the hideous!
  A City, yes,—a Forest, true,—
But each devouring each. Perfidious
Snake-plants had strangled what I knew

Was a pavilion once : each oak
Held on his horns some spoil he broke
By surreptitiously beneath
Upthrusting : pavements, as with teeth,
Griped huge weed widening crack and split
In squares and circles stone-work erst.
Oh, Nature—good ! Oh, Art—no whit
Less worthy ! Both in one—accurst !

BAD DREAMS. IV

It happened thus: my slab, though new,
  Was getting weather-stained,—beside,
Herbage, balm, peppermint o'ergrew
  Letter and letter: till you tried
Somewhat, the Name was scarce descried.

That strong stern man my lover came:
  —Was he my lover? Call him, pray,
My life's cold critic bent on blame
  Of all poor I could do or say
To make me worth his love one day—

One far day when, by diligent
  And dutiful amending faults,
Foibles, all weaknesses which went
  To challenge and excuse assaults
Of culture wronged by taste that halts—

Discrepancies should mar no plan
  Symmetric of the qualities
Claiming respect from—say—a man
  That 's strong and stern. "Once more he pries
Into me with those critic eyes!"

No question! so—"Conclude, condemn
  Each failure my poor self avows!
Leave to its fate all you contemn!
  There 's Solomon's selected spouse:
Earth needs must hold such maids—choose them!"

Why, he was weeping! Surely gone
  Sternness and strength: with eyes to ground
And voice a broken monotone—
  "Only be as you were! Abound
In foibles, faults,—laugh, robed and crowned

"As Folly's veriest queen,—care I
  One feather-fluff? Look pity, Love,
On prostrate me—your foot shall try
  This forehead's use—mount thence above,
And reach what Heaven you dignify!"

Now, what could bring such change about?
  The thought perplexed: till, following
His gaze upon the ground,—why, out
  Came all the secret! So, a thing
Thus simple has deposed my king!

For, spite of weeds that strove to spoil
  Plain reading on the lettered slab,
My name was clear enough—no soil
  Effaced the date when one chance stab
Of scorn . . . if only ghosts might blab!

INAPPREHENSIVENESS

We two stood simply friend-like side by side,
Viewing a twilight country far and wide,
Till she at length broke silence. "How it towers
Yonder, the ruin o'er this vale of ours!
The West's faint flare behind it so relieves
Its rugged outline—sight perhaps deceives,
Or I could almost fancy that I see
A branch wave plain—belike some wind-sown tree
Chance-rooted where a missing turret was.
What would I give for the perspective glass
At home, to make out if 't is really so!
Has Ruskin noticed here at Asolo
That certain weed-growths on the ravaged wall
Seem" . . . something that I could not say at all,
My thought being rather—as absorbed she sent
Look onward after look from eyes distent
With longing to reach Heaven's gate left ajar—
"Oh, fancies that might be, oh, facts that are!
What of a wilding? By you stands, and may
So stand unnoticed till the Judgment Day,
One who, if once aware that your regard
Claimed what his heart holds,—woke, as from its sward
The flower, the dormant passion, so to speak—
Then what a rush of life would startling wreak
Revenge on your inapprehensive stare
While, from the ruin and the West's faint flare,
You let your eyes meet mine, touch what you term

INAPPREHENSIVENESS

Quietude—that 's an universe in germ—
The dormant passion needing but a look
To burst into immense life !"
"No, the book
Which noticed how the wall-growths wave" said
she
"Was not by Ruskin."
I said "Vernon Lee?"

WHICH?

So, the three Court-ladies began
Their trial of who judged best
In esteeming the love of a man:
Who preferred with most reason was thereby confessed
Boy-Cupid's exemplary catcher and cager;
An Abbé crossed legs to decide on the wager.

First the Duchesse: "Mine for me—
Who were it but God's for Him,
And the King's for—who but he?
Both faithful and loyal, one grace more shall brim
His cup with perfection: a lady's true lover,
He holds—save his God and his king—none above her."

"I require"—outspoke the Marquise—
"Pure thoughts, ay, but also fine deeds:
Play the paladin must he, to please
My whim, and—to prove my knight's service exceeds
Your saint's and your loyalist's praying and kneeling—
Show wounds, each wide mouth to my mercy appealing."

Then the Comtesse: "My choice be a wretch,
Mere losel in body and soul,
Thrice accurst! What care I, so he stretch
Arms to me his sole saviour, love's ultimate goal,

Out of earth and men's noise—names of 'infidel,'
'traitor,'
Cast up at him? Crown me, crown's adjudicator!"

And the Abbé uncrossed his legs,
Took snuff, a reflective pinch,
Broke silence: "The question begs
Much pondering ere I pronounce. Shall I
flinch?
The love which to one and one only has reference
Seems terribly like what perhaps gains God's pre-
ference."

THE CARDINAL AND THE DOG

Crescenzio, the Pope's Legate at the High
Council, Trent,
—Year Fifteen hundred twenty-two, March
Twenty-five—intent
On writing letters to the Pope till late into the night,
Rose, weary, to refresh himself, and saw a mon-
strous sight:
(I give mine Author's very words: he penned, I
reindite.)
A black Dog of vast bigness, eyes flaming, ears
that hung
Down to the very ground almost, into the chamber
sprung
And made directly for him, and laid himself right
under
The table where Crescenzio wrote—who called in
fear and wonder
His servants in the ante-room, commanded every-
one
To look for and find out the beast: but, looking,
they found none.

The Cardinal fell melancholy, then sick, soon after
died:
And at Verona, as he lay on his death-bed, he cried
Aloud to drive away the Dog that leapt on his
bed-side.
Heaven keep us Protestants from harm: the rest
. . . no ill betide!

THE POPE AND THE NET

WHAT, he on whom our voices unanimously ran,
Made Pope at our last Conclave? Full low his life began:
His father earned the daily bread as just a fisherman.

So much the more his boy minds book, gives proof of mother-wit,
Becomes first Deacon, and then Priest, then Bishop: see him sit
No less than Cardinal ere long, while no one cries "Unfit!"

But someone smirks, some other smiles, jogs elbow and nods head:
Each winks at each: "'I-faith, a rise! Saint Peter's net, instead
Of sword and keys, is come in vogue!" You think he blushes red?

Not he, of humble holy heart! "Unworthy me!" he sighs:
"From fisher's drudge to Church's prince—it is indeed a rise:
So, here 's my way to keep the fact for ever in my eyes!"

And straightway in his palace-hall, where commonly is set

Some coat-of-arms, some portraiture ancestral, lo,
we met
His mean estate's reminder in his fisher-father's
net!

Which step conciliates all and some, stops cavil in
a trice:
"The humble holy heart that holds of new-born
pride no spice!
He 's just the saint to choose for Pope!" Each
adds "'T is my advice."

So, Pope he was: and when we flocked—its
sacred slipper on—
To kiss his foot, we lifted eyes, alack the thing
was gone—
That guarantee of lowlihead,—eclipsed that star
which shone!

Each eyed his fellow, one and all kept silence. I
cried "Pish!
I 'll make me spokesman for the rest, express the
common wish.
Why, Father, is the net removed?" "Son, it
hath caught the fish."

THE BEAN-FEAST

He was the man—Pope Sixtus, that Fifth, that swineherd's son :
He knew the right thing, did it, and thanked God when 't was done :
But of all he had to thank for, my fancy somehow leans
To thinking, what most moved him was a certain meal on beans.

For one day, as his wont was, in just enough disguise
As he went exploring wickedness,—to see with his own eyes
If law had due observance in the city's entrail dark
As well as where, i' the open, crime stood an obvious mark,—

He chanced, in a blind alley, on a tumble-down once house
Now hovel, vilest structure in Rome the ruinous :
And, as his tact impelled him, Sixtus adventured bold,
To learn how lowliest subjects bore hunger, toil, and cold.

There sat they at high-supper—man and wife, lad and lass,
Poor as you please but cleanly all and care-free : pain that was

—Forgotten, pain as sure to be let bide aloof its
time,—
Mightily munched the brave ones—what mattered
gloom or grime?

Said Sixtus "Feast, my children! who works hard
needs eat well.
I'm just a supervisor, would hear what you can tell.
Do any wrongs want righting? The Father tries
his best,
But, since he 's only mortal, sends such as I to
test
The truth of all that 's told him—how folk like you
may fare:
Come!—only don't stop eating—when mouth has
words to spare—

"You"—smiled he—"play the spokesman, bell-
wether of the flock!
Are times good, masters gentle? Your grievances
unlock!
How of your work and wages?—pleasures, if such
may be—
Pains, as such are for certain." Thus smiling
questioned he.

But somehow, spite of smiling, awe stole upon the
group—
An inexpressible surmise: why should a priest
thus stoop—
Pry into what concerned folk? Each visage fell.
Aware,
Cries Sixtus interposing: "Nay, children, have
no care!

"Fear nothing! Who employs me requires the
plain truth. Pelf

Beguiles who should inform me : so, I inform myself.
See!" And he threw his hood back, let the close vesture ope,
Showed face, and where on tippet the cross lay : 't was the Pope.

Imagine the joyful wonder! "How shall the like of us—
Poor souls—requite such blessing of our rude bean-feast?" "Thus—
Thus amply!" laughed Pope Sixtus. "I early rise, sleep late :
Who works may eat : they tempt me, your beans there : spare a plate!"

Down sat he on the door-step : 't was they this time said grace :
He ate up the last mouthful, wiped lips, and then, with face
Turned heavenward, broke forth thankful : "Not now, that earth obeys
Thy word in mine, that through me the peoples know Thy ways—
But that Thy care extendeth to Nature's homely wants,
And, while man's mind is strengthened, Thy goodness nowise scants
Man's body of its comfort,—that I whom kings and queens
Crouch to, pick crumbs from off my table, relish beans!
The thunders I but seem to launch, there plain Thy hand all see :
That I have appetite, digest, and thrive—that boon 's for me."

MUCKLE-MOUTH MEG

FROWNED the Laird on the Lord: "So, red-handed
I catch thee?
Death-doomed by our Law of the Border!
We 've a gallows outside and a chiel to dispatch
thee:
Who trespasses—hangs: all 's in order."

He met frown with smile, did the young English
gallant:
Then the Laird's dame: "Nay, Husband, I
beg!
He 's comely: be merciful! Grace for the callant
—If he marries our Muckle-mouth Meg!"

"No mile-wide-mouthed monster of yours do I
marry:
Grant rather the gallows!" laughed he.
"Foul fare kith and kin of you—why do you
tarry?"
"To tame your fierce temper!" quoth she.

"Shove him quick in the Hole, shut him fast for
a week:
Cold, darkness and hunger work wonders:
Who lion-like roars now, mouse-fashion will
squeak,
And 'it rains' soon succeed to 'it thunders.'"

MUCKLE-MOUTH MEG

A week did he bide in the cold and the dark
—Not hunger: for duly at morning
In flitted a lass, and a voice like a lark
Chirped "Muckle-mouth Meg still ye 're scorning?

"Go hang, but here 's parritch to hearten ye first!"
"Did Meg's muckle-mouth boast within some
Such music as yours, mine should match it or burst:
No frog-jaws! So tell folk, my Winsome!"

Soon week came to end, and, from Hole's door set wide,
Out he marched, and there waited the lassie:
"Yon gallows, or Muckle-mouth Meg for a bride!
Consider! Sky 's blue and turf 's grassy:

"Life 's sweet: shall I say ye wed Muckle-mouth Meg?"
"Not I" quoth the stout heart: "too eerie
The mouth that can swallow a bubblyjock's egg:
Shall I let it munch mine? Never, Dearie!"

"Not Muckle-mouth Meg? Wow, the obstinate man!
Perhaps he would rather wed me!"
"Ay, would he—with just for a dowry your can!"
"I 'm Muckle-mouth Meg" chirruped she.

"Then so—so—so—so—" as he kissed her apace—
"Will I widen thee out till thou turnest
From Margaret Minnikin-mou', by God's grace,
To Muckle-mouth Meg in good earnest!"

A. You blame me that I ran away?
Why, Sir, the enemy advanced:
Balls flew about, and—who can say
But one, if I stood firm, had glanced
In my direction? Cowardice?
I only know we don't live twice,
Therefore—shun death, is my advice.

B. Shun death at all risks? Well, at some!
True, I myself, Sir, though I scold
The cowardly, by no means come
Under reproof as overbold
—I, who would have no end of brutes
Cut up alive to guess what suits
My case and saves my toe from shoots.

She. YET womanhood you reverence,
So you profess!
He. With heart and soul.
She. Of which fact this is evidence!
To help Art-Study,—for some dole
Of certain wretched shillings,—you
Induce a woman—virgin too—
To strip and stand stark-naked?
He. True.
She. Nor feel you so degrade her?
He. What
—(Excuse the interruption)—clings
Half-savage-like around your hat?
She. Ah, do they please you? Wild-bird-wings!
Next season,—Paris-prints assert,—
We must go feathered to the skirt:
My modiste keeps on the alert.
Owls, hawks, jays—swallows most approve . . .
He. Dare I speak plainly?
She. Oh, I trust!
He. Then, Lady Blanche, it less would move
In heart and soul of me disgust
Did you strip off those spoils you wear,
And stand—for thanks, not shillings—bare,
To help Art like my Model there.

She well knew what absolved her—praise
In me for God's surpassing good,

Who granted to my reverent gaze
A type of purest womanhood.
You—clothed with murder of His best
Of harmless beings—stand the test!
What is it *you* know?

She. That you jest!

PONTE DELL' ANGELO, VENICE

STOP rowing! This one of our bye-canals
O'er a certain bridge you have to cross
That 's named "Of the Angel": listen why!
The name "Of the Devil" too much appals
Venetian acquaintance, so—his the loss,
While the gain goes . . . look on high!

An angel visibly guards yon house:
Above each scutcheon—a pair—stands he,
Enfolds them with droop of either wing:
The family's fortune were perilous
Did he thence depart—you will soon agree,
If I hitch into verse the thing.

For, once on a time, this house belonged
To a lawyer of note, with law and to spare,
But also with overmuch lust of gain:
In the matter of law you were nowise wronged,
But alas for the lucre! He picked you bare
To the bone. Did folk complain?

"I exact" growled he "work's rightful due:
'T is folk seek me, not I seek them.
Advice at its price! They succeed or fail,
Get law in each case—and a lesson too:
Keep clear of the Courts—is advice *ad rem*:
They 'll remember, I 'll be bail!"

So, he pocketed fee without a qualm.
What reason for squeamishness? Labour done,
To play he betook him with lightened heart,
Ate, drank and made merry with song or psalm,
Since the yoke of the Church is an easy one—
Fits neck nor causes smart.

Brief: never was such an extortionate
Rascal—the word has escaped my teeth
And yet—(all 's down in a book no ass
Indited, believe me!)—this reprobate
Was punctual at prayer-time: gold lurked beneath
Alloy of the rankest brass.

For, play the extortioner as he might,
Fleece folk each day and all day long,
There was this redeeming circumstance:
He never lay down to sleep at night
But he put up a prayer first, brief yet strong,
"Our Lady avert mischance!"

Now it happened at close of a fructuous week,
"I must ask" quoth he "some Saint to dine:
I want that widow well out of my ears
With her ailing and wailing. Who bade her seek
Redress at my hands? 'She was wronged!'
Folk whine
If to Law wrong right appears.

"Matteo da Bascio—he 's my man!
No less than Chief of the Capucins:
His presence will surely suffumigate
My house—fools think lies under a ban
If somebody loses what somebody wins.
Hark, there he knocks at the grate!

"Come in, thou blessed of Mother Church!
I go and prepare—to bid, that is,
My trusty and diligent servitor
Get all things in readiness. Vain the search
Through Venice for one to compare with this
My model of ministrants: for—

"For—once again, nay, three times over,
My helpmate 's an ape! so intelligent,
I train him to drudge at household work:
He toils and he moils, I live in clover:
Oh, you shall see! There 's a goodly scent—
From his cooking or I 'm a Turk!

"Scarce need to descend and supervise:
I 'll do it, however: wait here awhile!"
So, down to the kitchen gaily scuttles
Our host, nor notes the alarmed surmise
Of the holy man. "O depth of guile!
He blindly guzzles and guttles,

"While—who is it dresses the food and pours
The liquor? Some fiend—I make no doubt—
In likeness of—which of the loathly brutes?
An ape! Where hides he? No bull that gores,
No bear that hugs—'t is the mock and flout
Of an ape, fiend's face that suits.

"So—out with thee, creature, wherever thou hidest!
I charge thee, by virtue of . . . right do I judge!
There skulks he perdue, crouching under the bed.
Well done! What, forsooth, in beast's shape thou confidest?
I know and would name thee but that I begrudge
Breath spent on such carrion. Instead—

"I adjure thee by——" "Stay!" laughed the portent that rose
From floor up to ceiling: "No need to adjure!
See Satan in person, late ape by command
Of Him thou adjurest in vain. A saint's nose
Scents brimstone though incense be burned for a lure.
Yet, hence! for I 'm safe, understand!

"'T is my charge to convey to fit punishment's place
This lawyer, my liegeman, for cruelty wrought
On his clients, the widow and orphan, poor souls
He has plagued by exactions which proved law's disgrace,
Made equity void and to nothingness brought
God's pity. Fiends, on with fresh coals!"

"Stay!" nowise confounded, withstands Hell its match:
"How comes it, were truth in this story of thine,
God's punishment suffered a minute's delay?
Weeks, months have elapsed since thou squattedst at watch
For a spring on thy victim: what caused thee decline
Advantage till challenged to-day?"

"That challenge I meet with contempt," quoth the fiend.
"Thus much I acknowledge: the man's armed in mail:
I wait till a joint 's loose, then quick ply my claws.
Thy friend 's one good custom—he knows not—has screened
His flesh hitherto from what else would assail:
At 'Save me, Madonna!' I pause.

"That prayer did the losel but once pretermit,
My pounce were upon him. I keep me attent :
He 's in safety but till he 's caught napping.
Enough !"
"Ay, enough !" smiles the saint—"for the biter is bit,
The spy caught in somnolence. Vanish ! I 'm sent
To smooth up what fiends do in rough."

"I vanish ? Through wall or through roof ?" the ripost
Grinned gaily. "My orders were—'Leave not unharmed
The abode of this lawyer ! Do damage to prove
'T was for something thou quittedst the land of the lost—
To add to their number this unit !' Though charmed
From descent there, on earth that 's above

"I may haply amerce him." "So do, and begone,
I command thee ! For, look ! Though there 's doorway behind
And window before thee, go straight through the wall,
Leave a breach in the brickwork, a gap in the stone
For who passes to stare at !" "Spare speech ! I 'm resigned :
Here goes !" roared the goblin, as all—

Wide bat-wings, spread arms and legs, tail out a-stream,
Crash obstacles went, right and left, as he soared
Or else sank, was clean gone through the hole anyhow.

The Saint returned thanks: then a satisfied gleam
On the bald polished pate showed that triumph
was scored.
"To dinner with appetite now!"

Down he trips. "In good time!" smirks the host.
"Didst thou scent
Rich savour of roast meat? Where hides he, my
ape?
Look alive, be alert! He 's away to wash plates.
Sit down, Saint! What 's here? Dost examine
a rent
In the napkin thou twistest and twirlest? Agape...
Ha, blood is it drips nor abates

"From thy wringing a cloth, late was lavendered
fair?
What means such a marvel?" "Just this does
it mean:
I convince and convict thee of sin!" answers
straight
The Saint, wringing on, wringing ever—O rare!—
Blood—blood from a napery snow not more clean.
"A miracle shows thee thy state!

"See—blood thy extortions have wrung from the
flesh
Of thy clients who, sheep-like, arrived to be
shorn
And left thee—or fleeced to the quick or so
flayed
That, behold, their blood gurgles and grumbles
afresh
To accuse thee! Ay, down on thy knees, get up
sworn
To restore! Restitution once made,

PONTE DELL' ANGELO, VENICE

"Sin no more! Dost thou promise? Absolved,
then, arise!
Upstairs follow me! Art amazed at yon breach?
Who battered and shattered and scattered, escape
From thy purlieus obtaining? That Father of Lies
Thou wast wont to extol for his feats, all and
each,
The Devil 's disguised as thine ape!"

Be sure that our lawyer was torn by remorse,
Shed tears in a flood, vowed and swore so to
alter
His ways that how else could our Saint but declare
He was cleansed of past sin? "For sin future
—fare worse
Thou undoubtedly wilt," warned the Saint,
"shouldst thou falter
One whit!" "Oh, for that have no care!

"I am firm in my purposed amendment. But,
prithee,
Must ever affront and affright me yon gap?
Who made it for exit may find it of use
For entrance as easy. If, down in his smithy
He forges me fetters—when heated, mayhap,
He 'll up with an armful! Broke loose—

"How bar him out henceforth?" "Judiciously
urged!"
Was the good man's reply. "How to baulk him
is plain.
There 's nothing the Devil objects to so much,
So speedily flies from, as one of those purged
Of his presence, the angels who erst formed his
train—
His, their emperor. Choose one of such!

"Get fashioned his likeness and set him on high
At back of the breach thus adroitly filled up:
Display him as guard of two scutcheons, thy arms:
I warrant no devil attempts to get by
And disturb thee so guarded. Eat, drink, dine and sup
In thy rectitude, safe from alarms!"

So said and so done. See, the angel has place
Where the Devil had passage! All 's down in a book.
Gainsay me? Consult it! Still faithless? Trust *me?*
Trust Father Boverio who gave me the case
In his Annals—gets of it, by hook or by crook,
Two confirmative witnesses: three

Are surely enough to establish an act:
And thereby we learn—would we ascertain truth—
To trust wise tradition which took, at the time,
Note that served till slow history ventured on fact,
Though folk have their fling at tradition forsooth!
Row, boys, fore and aft, rhyme and chime!

BEATRICE SIGNORINI

This strange thing happened to a painter once :
Viterbo boasts the man among her sons
Of note, I seem to think : his ready tool
Picked up its precepts in Cortona's school—
That 's Pietro Berretini, whom they call
Cortona, these Italians : greatish-small,
Our painter was his pupil, by repute
His match if not his master absolute,
Though whether he spoiled fresco more or less,
And what 's its fortune, scarce repays your guess.
Still, for one circumstance, I save his name
—Francesco Romanelli : do the same !
He went to Rome and painted : there he knew
A wonder of a woman painting too—
For she, at least, was no Cortona's drudge :
Witness that ardent fancy-shape—I judge
A semblance of her soul—she called " Desire "
With starry front for guide, where sits the fire
She left to brighten Buonarroti's house.
If you see Florence, pay that piece your vows,
Though blockhead Baldinucci's mind, imbued
With monkish morals, bade folk "Drape the nude
And stop the scandal ! " quoth the record prim
I borrow this of : hang his book and him !
At Rome, then, where these fated ones met first,
The blossom of his life had hardly burst
While hers was blooming at full beauty's stand :
No less Francesco—when half-ripe he scanned
Consummate Artemisia—grew one want

To have her his and make her ministrant
With every gift of body and of soul
To him. In vain. Her sphery self was whole—
Might only touch his orb at Art's sole point.
Suppose he could persuade her to enjoint
Her life—past, present, future—all in his
At Art's sole point by some explosive kiss
Of love through lips, would love's success defeat
Artistry's haunting curse—the Incomplete?
Artists no doubt they both were,—what beside
Was she? who, long had felt heart, soul spread wide
Her life out, knowing much and loving well,
On either side Art's narrow space where fell
Reflection from his own speck: but the germ
Of individual genius—what we term
The very self, the God-gift whence had grown
Heart's life and soul's life,—how make that his own?
Vainly his Art, reflected, smiled in small
On Art's one facet of her ampler ball;
The rest, touch-free, took in, gave back heaven, earth,
All where he was not. Hope, well-nigh ere birth
Came to Desire, died off all-unfulfilled.
"What though in Art I stand the abler-skilled,"
(So he conceited: mediocrity
Turns on itself the self-transforming eye)
"If only Art were suing, mine would plead
To purpose: man—by nature I exceed
Woman the bounded: but how much beside
She boasts, would sue in turn and be denied!
Love her? My own wife loves me in a sort
That suits us both: she takes the world's report
Of what my work is worth, and, for the rest,
Concedes that, while his consort keeps her nest,

The eagle soars a licensed vagrant, lives
A wide free life which she at least forgives—
Good Beatricé Signorini! Well
And wisely did I choose her. But the spell
To subjugate this Artemisia—where?
She passionless?—she resolute to care
Nowise beyond the plain sufficiency
Of fact that she is she and I am I
—Acknowledged arbitrator for us both
In her life as in mine which she were loth
Even to learn the laws of? No, and no
Twenty times over! Ay, it must be so:
I for myself, alas!"

Whereon, instead
Of the checked lover's-utterance—why, he said
—Leaning above her easel: "Flesh is red"
(Or some such just remark)—"by no means white
As Guido's practice teaches: you are right."
Then came the better impulse: "What if pride
Were wisely trampled on, whate'er betide?
If I grow hers, not mine—join lives, confuse
Bodies and spirits, gain not her but lose
Myself to Artemisia? That were love!
Of two souls—one must bend, one rule above:
If I crouch under proudly, lord turned slave,
Were it not worthier both than if she gave
Herself—in treason to herself—to me?"

And, all the while, he felt it could not be.
Such love were true love: love that way who can!
Someone that's born half woman not whole man:
For man, prescribed man better or man worse,
Why, whether microcosm or universe,
What law prevails alike through great and small,
The world and man—world's miniature we call?

Male is the master. "That way"—smiled and sighed
Our true male estimator—"puts her pride
My wife in making me the outlet whence
She learns all Heaven allows: 't is my pretence
To paint: her lord should do what else but paint?
Do I break brushes, cloister me turned saint?
Then, best of all suits sanctity her spouse
Who acts for Heaven, allows and disallows
At pleasure, past appeal, the right, the wrong
In all things. That 's my wife's way. But this strong
Confident Artemisia—an adept
In Art does she conceit herself? 'Except
In just this instance,' tell her, 'no one draws
More rigidly observant of the laws
Of right design: yet here,—permit me hint,—
If the acromion had a deeper dint,
That shoulder were perfection.' What surprise
—Nay scorn, shoots black fire from those startled eyes!
She to be lessoned in design forsooth!
I 'm doomed and done for, since I spoke the truth.
Make my own work the subject of dispute—
Fails it of just perfection absolute
Somewhere? Those motors, flexors,—don't I know
Ser Santi, styled 'Tirititototo
The pencil-prig,' might blame them? Yet my wife—
Were he and his nicknamer brought to life,
Tito and Titian, to pronounce again—
Ask her who knows more—I or the great Twain
Our colourist and draughtsman!
"I help her,
Not she helps me; and neither shall demur

Because my portion is——" he chose to think—
"Quite other than a woman's: I may drink
At many waters, must repose by none—
Rather arise and fare forth, having done
Duty to one new excellence the more,
Abler thereby, though impotent before
So much was gained of knowledge. Best depart
From this last lady I have learned by heart!"

Thus he concluded of himself—resigned
To play the man and master: "Man boasts mind:
Woman, man's sport calls mistress, to the same
Does body's suit and service. Would she claim
—My placid Beatricé-wife—pretence
Even to blame her lord if, going hence,
He wistfully regards one whom—did fate
Concede—he might accept queen, abdicate
Kingship because of?—one of no meek sort
But masterful as he: man's match in short?
Oh, there 's no secret I were best conceal!
Bicé shall know; and should a stray tear steal
From out the blue eye, stain the rose cheek—bah!
A smile, a word 's gay reassurance—ah,
With kissing interspersed,—shall make amends,
Turn pain to pleasure."
"What, in truth so ends
Abruptly, do you say, our intercourse?"
Next day, asked Artemisia: "I 'll divorce
Husband and wife no longer. Go your ways,
Leave Rome! Viterbo owns no equal, says
The bye-word, for fair women: you, no doubt,
May boast a paragon all specks without,
Using the painter's privilege to choose
Among what 's rarest. Will your wife refuse
Acceptance from—no rival—of a gift?
You paint the human figure I make shift

Humbly to reproduce: but, in my hours
Of idlesse, what I fain would paint is—flowers.
Look now!"
She twitched aside a veiling cloth.
"Here is my keepsake—frame and picture both:
For see, the frame is all of flowers festooned
About an empty space,—left thus, to wound
No natural susceptibility:
How can I guess? 'T is you must fill, not I,
The central space with—her whom you like best!
That is your business, mine has been the rest.
But judge!"
How judge them? Each of us, in flowers,
Chooses his love, allies it with past hours,
Old meetings, vanished forms and faces: no—
Here let each favourite unmolested blow
For one heart's homage, no tongue's banal praise,
Whether the rose appealingly bade "Gaze
Your fill on me, sultana who dethrone
The gaudy tulip!" or 't was "Me alone
Rather do homage to, who lily am,
No unabashed rose!" "Do I vainly cram
My cup with sweets, your jonquil?" "Why forget
Vernal endearments with the violet?"
So they contested yet concerted, all
As one, to circle round about, enthral
Yet, self-forgetting, push to prominence
The midmost wonder, gained no matter whence.

There 's a tale extant, in a book I conned
Long years ago, which treats of things beyond
The common, antique times and countries queer
And customs strange to match. "'T is said, last
year,"
(Recounts my author,) "that the King had mind
To view his kingdom—guessed at from behind

A palace-window hitherto. Announced
No sooner was such purpose than 't was pounced
Upon by all the ladies of the land—
Loyal but light of life: they formed a band
Of loveliest ones but lithest also, since
Proudly they all combined to bear their prince.
Backs joined to breasts,—arms, legs,—nay, ankles,
wrists,
Hands, feet, I know not by what turns and twists,
So interwoven lay that you believed
'T was one sole beast of burden which received
The monarch on its back, of breadth not scant
Since fifty girls made one white elephant."
So with the fifty flowers which shapes and hues
Blent, as I tell, and made one fast yet loose
Mixture of beauties, composite, distinct
No less in each combining flower that linked
With flower to form a fit environment
For—whom might be the painter's heart's intent
Thus, in the midst enhaloed, to enshrine?

"This glory-guarded middle space—is mine?
For me to fill?"
"For you, my Friend! We part,
Never perchance to meet again. Your Art—
What if I mean it—so to speak—shall wed
My own, be witness of the life we led
When sometimes it has seemed our souls near
found
Each one the other as its mate—unbound
Had yours been haply from the better choice
—Beautiful Bicé: 't is the common voice,
The crowning verdict. Make whom you like best
Queen of the central space, and manifest
Your predilection for what flower beyond
All flowers finds favour with you. I am fond

Of—say—yon rose's rich predominance,
While you—what wonder?—more affect the glance
The gentler violet from its leafy screen
Ventures: so—choose your flower and paint your queen!"

Oh but the man was ready, head as hand,
Instructed and adroit. "Just as you stand,
Stay and be made—would Nature but relent—
By Art immortal!"
Every implement
In tempting reach—a palette primed, each squeeze
Of oil-paint in its proper patch—with these,
Brushes, a veritable sheaf to grasp!
He worked as he had never dared.
"Unclasp
My Art from yours who can!"—he cried at length,
As down he threw the pencil—"Grace from Strength
Dissociate, from your flowery fringe detach
My face of whom it frames,—the feat will match
With that of Time should Time from me extract
Your memory, Artemisia!" And in fact,—
What with the pricking impulse, sudden glow
Of soul—head, hand co-operated so
That face was worthy of its frame, 't is said—
Perfect, suppose!
They parted. Soon instead
Of Rome was home,—of Artemisia—well,
The placid-perfect wife. And it befell
That after the first incontestably
Blessedest of all blisses (—wherefore try
Your patience with embracings and the rest
Due from Calypso's all-unwilling guest
To his Penelope?)—there somehow came
The coolness which as duly follows flame.

So, one day, "What if we inspect the gifts
My Art has gained us?"
Now the wife uplifts
A casket-lid, now tries a medal's chain
Round her own lithe neck, fits a ring in vain
—Too loose on the fine finger,—vows and swears
The jewel with two pendent pearls like pears
Betters a lady's bosom—witness else!
And so forth, while Ulysses smiles.
"Such spells
Subdue such natures—sex must worship toys
—Trinkets and trash: yet, ah, quite other joys
Must stir from sleep the passionate abyss
Of—such an one as her I know—not this
My gentle consort with the milk for blood!
Why, did it chance that in a careless mood
(In those old days, gone—never to return—
When we talked—she to teach and I to learn)
I dropped a word, a hint which might imply
Consorts exist—how quick flashed fire from eye,
Brow blackened, lip was pinched by furious lip!
I needed no reminder of my slip:
One warning taught me wisdom. Whereas here . . .
Aha, a sportive fancy! Eh, what fear
Of harm to follow? Just a whim indulged!

"My Beatricé, there 's an undivulged
Surprise in store for you: the moment 's fit
For letting loose a secret: out with it!
Tributes to worth, you rightly estimate
These gifts of Prince and Bishop, Church and State:
Yet, may I tell you? Tastes so disagree!
There 's one gift, preciousest of all to me,
I doubt if you would value as well worth
The obvious sparkling gauds that men unearth

For toy-cult mainly of you womankind;
Such make you marvel, I concede: while blind
The sex proves to the greater marvel here
I veil to baulk its envy. Be sincere!
Say, should you search creation far and wide,
Was ever face like this?"

He drew aside
The veil, displayed the flower-framed portrait kept
For private delectation.
No adept
In florist's lore more accurately named
And praised or, as appropriately, blamed
Specimen after specimen of skill,
Than Bicé. "Rightly placed the daffodil—
Scarcely so right the blue germander. Grey
Good mouse-ear! Hardly your auricula
Is powdered white enough. It seems to me
Scarlet not crimson, that anemone:
But there 's amends in the pink saxifrage.
O darling dear ones, let me disengage
You innocents from what your harmlessness
Clasps lovingly! Out thou from their caress,
Serpent!"

Whereat forth-flashing from her coils
On coils of hair, the *spilla* in its toils
Of yellow wealth, the dagger-plaything kept
To pin its plaits together, life-like leapt
And—woe to all inside the coronal!
Stab followed stab,—cut, slash, she ruined all
The masterpiece. Alack for eyes and mouth
And dimples and endearment—North and South,
East, West, the tatters in a fury flew:
There yawned the circlet. What remained to do?

She flung the weapon, and, with folded arms
And mien defiant of such low alarms
As death and doom beyond death, Bicé stood
Passively statuesque, in quietude
Awaiting judgment.
And out judgment burst
With frank unloading of love's laughter, first
Freed from its unsuspected source. Some throe
Must needs unlock love's prison-bars, let flow
The joyance.
"Then you ever were, still are,
And henceforth shall be—no occulted star
But my resplendent Bicé, sun-revealed,
Full-rondure! Woman-glory unconcealed,
So front me, find and claim and take your own—
My soul and body yours and yours alone,
As you are mine, mine wholly! Heart's love, take—
Use your possession—stab or stay at will
Here—hating, saving—woman with the skill
To make man beast or god!"
And so it proved:
For, as beseemed new godship, thus he loved,
Past power to change, until his dying-day,—
Good fellow! And I fain would hope—some say
Indeed for certain—that our painter's toils
At fresco-splashing, finer stroke in oils,
Were not so mediocre after all;
Perhaps the work appears unduly small
From having loomed too large in old esteem,
Patronized by late Papacy. I seem
Myself to have cast eyes on certain work
In sundry galleries, no judge needs shirk
From moderately praising. He designed

Correctly, nor in colour lagged behind
His age: but both in Florence and in Rome
The elder race so make themselves at home
That scarce we give a glance to ceilingfuls
Of such like as Francesco. Still, one culls
From out the heaped laudations of the time
The pretty incident I put in rhyme.

FLUTE-MUSIC, WITH AN ACCOMPANIMENT

He. Ah, the bird-like fluting
Through the ash-tops yonder—
Bullfinch-bubblings, soft sounds suiting
What sweet thoughts, I wonder?
Fine-pearled notes that surely
Gather, dewdrop-fashion,
Deep-down in some heart which purely
Secretes globuled passion—
Passion insuppressive—
Such is piped, for certain;
Love, no doubt, nay, love excessive
'T is, your ash-tops curtain.

Would your ash-tops open
We might spy the player—
Seek and find some sense which no pen
Yet from singer, sayer,
Ever has extracted:
Never, to my knowledge,
Yet has pedantry enacted
That, in Cupid's College,
Just this variation
Of the old old yearning
Should by plain speech have salvation,
Yield new men new learning.

"Love!" but what love, nicely
New from old disparted,
Would the player teach precisely?
First of all, he started

In my brain Assurance—
  Trust—entire Contentment—
Passion proved by much endurance;
  Then came—not resentment,
No, but simply Sorrow:
  What was seen had vanished:
Yesterday so blue! To-morrow
  Blank, all sunshine banished.

Hark! 'T is Hope resurges,
  Struggling through obstruction—
Forces a poor smile which verges
  On Joy's introduction.
Now, perhaps, mere Musing:
  "Holds earth such a wonder?
Fairy-mortal, soul-sense-fusing
  Past thought's power to sunder!"
What? calm Acquiescence?
  "Daisied turf gives room to
Trefoil, plucked once in her presence—
  Growing by her tomb too!"

She. All 's your fancy-spinning!
  Here 's the fact: a neighbour
Never-ending, still beginning,
  Recreates his labour:
Deep o'er desk he drudges,
  Adds, divides, subtracts and
Multiplies, until he judges
  Noonday-hour's exact sand
Shows the hourglass emptied:
  Then comes lawful leisure,
Minutes rare from toil exempted,
  Fit to spend in pleasure.

Out then with—what treatise?
Youth's Complete Instructor

FLUTE-MUSIC

How to play the Flute. Quid petis?
Follow Youth's conductor
On and on, through *Easy*,
Up to *Harder*, *Hardest*
Flute-piece, till thou, flautist wheezy,
Possibly discardest
Tootlings hoarse and husky,
Mayst expend with courage
Breath—on tunes once bright now dusky—
Meant to cool thy porridge.

That 's an air of Tulou's
He maltreats persistent,
Till as lief I 'd hear some Zulu's
Bone-piped bag, breath-distent,
Madden native dances.
I 'm the man's familiar:
Unexpectedness enhances
What your ear's auxiliar
—Fancy—finds suggestive.
Listen! That 's *legato*
Rightly played, his fingers restive
Touch as if *staccato*.

He. Ah, you trick-betrayer!
Telling tales, unwise one?
So the secret of the player
Was—he could surprise one
Well-nigh into trusting
Here was a musician
Skilled consummately, yet lusting
Through no vile ambition
After making captive
All the world,—rewarded
Amply by one stranger's rapture,
Common praise discarded.

So, without assistance
Such as music rightly
Needs and claims,—defying distance,
Overleaping lightly
Obstacles which hinder,—
He, for my approval,
All the same and all the kinder
Made mine what might move all
Earth to kneel adoring:
Took—while he piped Gounod's
Bit of passionate imploring—
Me for Juliet: who knows?

No! as you explain things,
All 's mere repetition,
Practise-pother: of all vain things
Why waste pooh or pish on
Toilsome effort—never
Ending, still beginning—
After what should pay endeavour
—Right-performance? winning
Weariness from you who,
Ready to admire some
Owl's fresh hooting—Tu-whit, tu-who—
Find stale thrush-songs tiresome.

She. Songs, Spring thought perfection,
Summer criticizes:
What in May escaped detection,
August, past surprises,
Notes, and names each blunder.
You, the just-initiate,
Praise to heart's content (what wonder?)
Tootings I hear vitiate
Romeo's serenading—
I who, times full twenty,

FLUTE-MUSIC

Turned to ice—no ash-tops aiding—
  At his *caldamente*.
So, 't was distance altered
  Sharps to flats? The missing
Bar when syncopation faltered
  (You thought—paused for kissing!)
Ash-tops too felonious
  Intercepted? Rather
Say—they well-nigh made euphonious
  Discord, helped to gather
Phrase, by phrase, turn patches
  Into simulated
Unity which botching matches,—
  Scraps redintegrated.

He. Sweet, are you suggestive
  Of an old suspicion
Which has always found me restive
  To its admonition
When it ventured whisper
  "Fool, the strifes and struggles
Of your trembler—blusher—lisper
  Were so many juggles,
Tricks tried—oh, so often!—
  Which once more do duty,
Find again a heart to soften,
  Soul to snare with beauty."

Birth-blush of the briar-rose,
  Mist-bloom of the hedge-sloe,
Someone gains the prize: admire rose
  Would he, when noon's wedge—slow—
Sure, has pushed, expanded
  Rathe pink to raw redness?
Would he covet sloe when sanded
  By road-dust to deadness?

So—restore their value!
  Ply a water-sprinkle!
Then guess sloe is fingered, shall you?
  Find in rose a wrinkle?

Here what played Aquarius?
  Distance—ash-tops aiding,
Reconciled scraps else contrarious,
  Brightened stuff fast fading.
Distance—call your shyness:
  Was the fair one peevish?
Coyness softened out of slyness.
  Was she cunning, thievish,
All-but-proved impostor?
  Bear but one day's exile,
Ugly traits were wholly lost or
  Screened by fancies flexile—

Ash-tops these, you take me?
  Fancies' interference
Changed . . .
          But since I sleep, don't wake me!
  What if all 's appearance?
Is not outside seeming
  Real as substance inside?
Both are facts, so leave me dreaming:
  If who loses wins I 'd
Ever lose,—conjecture,
  From one phrase trilled deftly,
All the piece. So, end your lecture,
  Let who lied be left lie!

"IMPERANTE AUGUSTO NATUS EST——"

WHAT it was struck the terror into me?
This, Publius: closer! while we wait our turn
I 'll tell you. Water 's warm (they ring inside)
At the eighth hour, till when no use to bathe.

Here in the vestibule where now we sit,
One scarce stood yesterday, the throng was such
Of loyal gapers, folk all eye and ear
While Lucius Varius Rufus in their midst
Read out that long-planned late-completed piece,
His Panegyric on the Emperor.
"Nobody like him" little Flaccus laughed
"At leading forth an Epos with due pomp!
Only, when godlike Cæsar swells the theme,
How should mere mortals hope to praise aright?
Tell me, thou offshoot of Etruscan kings!"
Whereat Mæcenas smiling sighed assent.

I paid my quadrans, left the Thermæ's roar
Of rapture as the poet asked "What place
Among the godships Jove, for Cæsar's sake,
Would bid its actual occupant vacate
In favour of the new divinity?"
And got the expected answer "Yield thine own!"—
Jove thus dethroned, I somehow wanted air,
And found myself a-pacing street and street,
Letting the sunset, rosy over Rome,
Clear my head dizzy with the hubbub—say

As if thought's dance therein had kicked up dust
By trampling on all else: the world lay prone,
As—poet-propped, in brave hexameters—
Their subject triumphed up from man to God.
Caius Octavius Cæsar the August—
Where was escape from his prepotency?
I judge I may have passed—how many piles
Of structure dropt like doles from his free hand
To Rome on every side? Why, right and left,
For temples you 've the Thundering Jupiter,
Avenging Mars, Apollo Palatine:
How count Piazza, Forum—there 's a third
All but completed. You 've the Theatre
Named of Marcellus—all his work, such work!—
One thought still ending, dominating all—
With warrant Varius sang "Be Cæsar God!"
By what a hold arrests he Fortune's wheel,
Obtaining and retaining heaven and earth
Through Fortune, if you like, but favour—no!
For the great deeds flashed by me, fast and thick
As stars which storm the sky on autumn nights—
Those conquests! but peace crowned them,—so,
of peace!
Count up his titles only—these, in few—
Ten years Triumvir, Consul thirteen times,
Emperor, nay—the glory topping all—
Hailed Father of his Country, last and best
Of titles, by himself accepted so:
And why not? See but feats achieved in Rome—
Not to say, Italy—he planted there
Some thirty colonies—but Rome itself
All new-built, "marble now, brick once," he
boasts:
This Portico, that Circus. Would you sail?
He has drained Tiber for you: would you walk?
He straightened out the long Flaminian Way.

Poor? Profit by his score of donatives!
Rich—that is, mirthful? Half-a-hundred games
Challenge your choice! There 's Rome—for you
and me
Only? The centre of the world besides!
For, look the wide world over, where ends Rome?
To sunrise? There 's Euphrates—all between!
To sunset? Ocean and immensity:
North,—stare till Danube stops you: South, see
Nile,
The Desert and the earth-upholding Mount.
Well may the poet-people each with each
Vie in his praise, our company of swans,
Virgil and Horace, singers—in their way—
Nearly as good as Varius, though less famed:
Well may they cry, "No mortal, plainly God!"

Thus to myself myself said, while I walked:
Or would have said, could thought attain to speech,
Clean baffled by enormity of bliss
The while I strove to scale its heights and sound
Its depths—this masterdom o'er all the world
Of one who was but born,—like you, like me,
Like all the world he owns,—of flesh and blood.
But he—how grasp, how gauge his own conceit
Of bliss to me near inconceivable?
Or—since such flight too much makes reel the
brain—
Let 's sink—and so take refuge, as it were,
From life's excessive altitude—to life's
Breathable wayside shelter at its base!
If looms thus large this Cæsar to myself
—Of senatorial rank and somebody—
How must he strike the vulgar nameless crowd,
Innumerous swarm that 's nobody at all?
Why,—for an instance,—much as yon gold shape

Crowned, sceptred, on the temple opposite—
Fulgurant Jupiter—must daze the sense
Of—say, yon outcast begging from its step!
What, anti-Cæsar, monarch in the mud,
As he is pinnacled above thy pate?
Ay, beg away! thy lot contrasts full well
With his whose bounty yields thee this support—
Our Holy and Inviolable One,
Cæsar, whose bounty built the fane above!
Dost read my thought? Thy garb, alack, displays
Sore usage truly in each rent and stain—
Faugh! Wash though in Suburra! 'Ware the dogs
Who may not so disdain a meal on thee!
What, stretchest forth a palm to catch my alms?
Aha, why yes: I must appear—who knows?—
I, in my toga, to thy rags and thee—
Quæstor—nay, Ædile, Censor—Pol! perhaps
The very City-Prætor's noble self!
As to me Cæsar, so to thee am I?
Good: nor in vain shall prove thy quest, poor rogue!
Hither—hold palm out—take this quarter-as!

And who did take it? As he raised his head,
(My gesture was a trifle—well, abrupt),
Back fell the broad flap of the peasant's-hat,
The homespun cloak that muffled half his cheek
Dropped somewhat, and I had a glimpse—just one!
One was enough. Whose—whose might be the face?
That unkempt careless hair—brown, yellowish—
Those sparkling eyes beneath their eyebrows' ridge
(Each meets each, and the hawk-nose rules between)
—That was enough, no glimpse was needed more!
And terrifyingly into my mind

"IMPERANTE AUGUSTO NATUS EST—"

Came that quick-hushed report was whispered us,
"They do say, once a year in sordid garb
He plays the mendicant, sits all day long,
Asking and taking alms of who may pass,
And so averting, if submission help,
Fate's envy, the dread chance and change of things
When Fortune—for a word, a look, a nought—
Turns spiteful and—the petted lioness—
Strikes with her sudden paw, and prone falls each
Who patted late her neck superiorly,
Or trifled with those claw-tips velvet-sheathed."
"He 's God!" shouts Lucius Varius Rufus: "Man
And worms'-meat any moment!" mutters low
Some Power, admonishing the mortal-born.

Ay, do you mind? There 's meaning in the fact
That whoso conquers, triumphs, enters Rome,
Climbing the Capitolian, soaring thus
To glory's summit,—Publius, do you mark—
Ever the same attendant who, behind,
Above the Conqueror's head supports the crown
All-too-demonstrative for human wear,
—One hand's employment—all the while reserves
Its fellow, backward flung, to point how, close
Appended from the car, beneath the foot
Of the up-borne exulting Conqueror,
Frown—half-descried—the instruments of shame,
The malefactor's due. Crown, now—Cross, when?

Who stands secure? Are even Gods so safe?
Jupiter that just now is dominant—
Are not there ancient dismal tales how once
A predecessor reigned ere Saturn came,
And who can say if Jupiter be last?

Was it for nothing the grey Sibyl wrote
"Cæsar Augustus regnant, shall be born
In blind Judæa"—one to master him,
Him and the universe? An old-wife's tale?

Bath-drudge! Here, slave! No cheating! Our
turn next.
No loitering, or be sure you taste the lash!
Two strigils, two oil-drippers, each a sponge!

DEVELOPMENT

My Father was a scholar and knew Greek.
When I was five years old, I asked him once
"What do you read about?"
"The siege of Troy."
"What is a siege and what is Troy?"
Whereat
He piled up chairs and tables for a town,
Set me a-top for Priam, called our cat
—Helen, enticed away from home (he said)
By wicked Paris, who couched somewhere close
Under the footstool, being cowardly,
But whom—since she was worth the pains, poor puss—
Towzer and Tray,—our dogs, the Atreidai, sought
By taking Troy to get possession of
—Always when great Achilles ceased to sulk,
(My pony in the stable)—forth would prance
And put to flight Hector—our page-boy's self.
This taught me who was who and what was what:
So far I rightly understood the case
At five years old: a huge delight it proved
And still proves—thanks to that instructor sage
My Father, who knew better than turn straight
Learning's full flare on weak-eyed ignorance,
Or, worse yet, leave weak eyes to grow sand-blind,
Content with darkness and vacuity.

It happened, two or three years afterward,
That—I and playmates playing at Troy's Siege—
My Father came upon our make-believe.
"How would you like to read yourself the tale
Properly told, of which I gave you first
Merely such notion as a boy could bear?
Pope, now, would give you the precise account
Of what, some day, by dint of scholarship,
You 'll hear—who knows?—from Homer's very mouth.
Learn Greek by all means, read the 'Blind Old Man,
Sweetest of Singers'—*tuphlos* which means 'blind,'
Hedistos which means 'sweetest.' Time enough!
Try, anyhow, to master him some day;
Until when, take what serves for substitute,
Read Pope, by all means!"
So I ran through Pope,
Enjoyed the tale—what history so true?
Also attacked my Primer, duly drudged,
Grew fitter thus for what was promised next—
The very thing itself, the actual words,
When I could turn—say, Buttmann to account.

Time passed, I ripened somewhat: one fine day,
"Quite ready for the Iliad, nothing less?
There 's Heine, where the big books block the shelf:
Don't skip a word, thumb well the Lexicon!"

I thumbed well and skipped nowise till I learned
Who was who, what was what, from Homer's tongue,
And there an end of learning. Had you asked
The all-accomplished scholar, twelve years old,

DEVELOPMENT

"Who was it wrote the Iliad?"—what a laugh!
"Why, Homer, all the world knows: of his life
Doubtless some facts exist: it 's everywhere:
We have not settled, though, his place of birth:
He begged, for certain, and was blind beside:
Seven cities claimed him—Scio, with best right,
Thinks Byron. What he wrote? Those Hymns we have.
Then there 's the 'Battle of the Frogs and Mice,'
That 's all—unless they dig 'Margites' up
(I 'd like that) nothing more remains to know."

Thus did youth spend a comfortable time;
Until—"What 's this the Germans say is fact
That Wolf found out first? It 's unpleasant work
Their chop and change, unsettling one's belief:
All the same, while we live, we learn, that 's sure."
So, I bent brow o'er *Prolegomena*.
And, after Wolf, a dozen of his like
Proved there was never any Troy at all,
Neither Besiegers nor Besieged,—nay, worse,
No actual Homer, no authentic text,
No warrant for the fiction I, as fact,
Had treasured in my heart and soul so long—
Ay, mark you! and as fact held still, still hold,
Spite of new knowledge, in my heart of hearts
And soul of souls, fact's essence freed and fixed
From accidental fancy's guardian sheath.
Assuredly thenceforward—thank my stars!—
However it got there, deprive who could—
Wring from the shrine my precious tenantry,
Helen, Ulysses, Hector and his Spouse,
Achilles and his Friend?—though Wolf—ah, Wolf!
Why must he needs come doubting, spoil a dream?

But then "No dream 's worth waking"—Browning says:
And here 's the reason why I tell thus much.
I, now mature man, you anticipate,
May blame my Father justifiably
For letting me dream out my nonage thus,
And only by such slow and sure degrees
Permitting me to sift the grain from chaff,
Get truth and falsehood known and named as such.
Why did he ever let me dream at all,
Not bid me taste the story in its strength?
Suppose my childhood was scarce qualified
To rightly understand mythology,
Silence at least was in his power to keep:
I might have—somehow—correspondingly—
Well, who knows by what method, gained my gains,
Been taught, by forthrights not meanderings,
My aim should be to loathe, like Peleus' son,
A lie as Hell's Gate, love my wedded wife,
Like Hector, and so on with all the rest.
Could not I have excogitated this
Without believing such men really were?
That is—he might have put into my hand
The "Ethics"? In translation, if you please,
Exact, no pretty lying that improves,
To suit the modern taste: no more, no less—
The "Ethics": 't is a treatise I find hard
To read aright now that my hair is grey,
And I can manage the original.
At five years old—how ill had fared its leaves!
Now, growing double o'er the Stagirite,
At least I soil no page with bread and milk,
Nor crumple, dogsear and deface—boys' way.

REPHAN[1]

How I lived, ere my human life began
In this world of yours,—like you, made man,—
When my home was the Star of my God Rephan?

Come then around me, close about,
World-weary earth-born ones! Darkest doubt
Or deepest despondency keeps you out?

Nowise! Before a word I speak,
Let my circle embrace your worn, your weak,
Brow-furrowed old age, youth's hollow cheek—

Diseased in the body, sick in soul,
Pinched poverty, satiate wealth,—your whole
Array of despairs! Have I read the roll?

All here? Attend, perpend! O Star
Of my God Rephan, what wonders are
In thy brilliance fugitive, faint and far!

Far from me, native to thy realm,
Who shared its perfections which o'erwhelm
Mind to conceive. Let drift the helm,

Let drive the sail, dare unconfined
Embark for the vastitude, O Mind,
Of an absolute bliss! Leave earth behind!

[1] Suggested by a very early recollection of a prose story by the noble woman and imaginative writer, Jane Taylor, of Ongar.

Here, by extremes, at a mean you guess:
There, all 's at most—not more, not less:
Nowhere deficiency nor excess.

No want—whatever should be, is now:
No growth—that 's change, and change comes—
how
To royalty born with crown on brow?

Nothing begins—so needs to end:
Where fell it short at first? Extend
Only the same, no change can mend!

I use your language: mine—no word
Of its wealth would help who spoke, who heard,
To a gleam of intelligence. None preferred,

None felt distaste when better and worse
Were uncontrastable: bless or curse
What—in that uniform universe?

Can your world's phrase, your sense of things
Forth-figure the Star of my God? No springs,
No winters throughout its space. Time brings

No hope, no fear: as to-day, shall be
To-morrow: advance or retreat need we
At our stand-still through eternity?

All happy: needs must we so have been,
Since who could be otherwise? All serene:
What dark was to banish, what light to screen?

Earth's rose is a bud that 's checked or grows
As beams may encourage or blasts oppose:
Our lives leapt forth, each a full-orbed rose—

Each rose sole rose in a sphere that spread
Above and below and around—rose-red :
No fellowship, each for itself instead.

One better than I—would prove I lacked
Somewhat : one worse were a jarring fact
Disturbing my faultlessly exact.

How did it come to pass there lurked
Somehow a seed of change that worked
Obscure in my heart till perfection irked ?—

Till out of its peace at length grew strife—
Hopes, fears, loves, hates,—obscurely rife,—
My life grown a-tremble to turn your life ?

Was it Thou, above all lights that are,
Prime Potency, did Thy hand unbar
The prison-gate of Rephan my Star ?

In me did such potency wake a pulse
Could trouble tranquillity that lulls
Not lashes inertion till throes convulse

Soul's quietude into discontent ?
As when the completed rose bursts, rent
By ardors till forth from its orb are sent

New petals that mar—unmake the disc—
Spoil rondure : what in it ran brave risk,
Changed apathy's calm to strife, bright, brisk,

Pushed simple to compound, sprang and spread
Till, fresh-formed, facetted, floretted,
The flower that slept woke a star instead ?

No mimic of Star Rephan! How long
I stagnated there where weak and strong,
The wise and the foolish, right and wrong,

Are merged alike in a neutral Best,
Can I tell? No more than at whose behest
The passion arose in my passive breast,

And I yearned for no sameness but difference
In thing and thing, that should shock my sense
With a want of worth in them all, and thence

Startle me up, by an Infinite
Discovered above and below me—height
And depth alike to attract my flight,

Repel my descent: by hate taught love.
Oh, gain were indeed to see above
Supremacy ever—to move, remove,

Not reach—aspire yet never attain
To the object aimed at! Scarce in vain,—
As each stage I left nor touched again.

To suffer, did pangs bring the loved one bliss,
Wring knowledge from ignorance,—just for this—
To add one drop to a love-abyss!

Enough: for you doubt, you hope, O men,
You fear, you agonize, die: what then?
Is an end to your life's work out of ken?

Have you no assurance that, earth at end,
Wrong will prove right? Who made shall mend
In the higher sphere to which yearnings tend?

Why should I speak? You divine the test.
When the trouble grew in my pregnant breast
A voice said "So wouldst thou strive, not rest? 105

"Burn and not smoulder, win by worth,
Not rest content with a wealth that 's dearth?
Thou art past Rephan, thy place be Earth!"

REVERIE

I KNOW there shall dawn a day
  —Is it here on homely earth?
Is it yonder, worlds away,
  Where the strange and new have birth,
That Power comes full in play?

Is it here, with grass about,
  Under befriending trees,
When shy buds venture out,
  And the air by mild degrees
Puts winter's death past doubt?

Is it up amid whirl and roar
  Of the elemental flame
Which star-flecks heaven's dark floor,
  That, new yet still the same,
Full in play comes Power once more?

Somewhere, below, above,
  Shall a day dawn—this I know—
When Power, which vainly strove
  My weakness to o'erthrow,
Shall triumph. I breathe, I move,

I truly am, at last!
  For a veil is rent between
Me and the truth which passed
  Fitful, half-guessed, half-seen,
Grasped at—not gained, held fast.

REVERIE

I for my race and me
  Shall apprehend life's law :
In the legend of man shall see
  Writ large what small I saw
In my life's tale : both agree.

As the record from youth to age
  Of my own, the single soul—
So the world's wide book : one page
  Deciphered explains the whole
Of our common heritage.

How but from near to far
  Should knowledge proceed, increase ?
Try the clod ere test the star !
  Bring our inside strife to peace
Ere we wage, on the outside, war !

So, my annals thus begin :
  With body, to life awoke
Soul, the immortal twin
  Of body which bore soul's yoke
Since mortal and not akin.

By means of the flesh, grown fit,
  Mind, in surview of things,
Now soared, anon alit
  To treasure its gatherings
From the ranged expanse—to-wit,

Nature,—earth's, heaven's wide show
  Which taught all hope, all fear :
Acquainted with joy and woe,
  I could say "Thus much is clear,
Doubt annulled thus much : I know.

"All is effect of cause:
As it would, has willed and done
Power: and my mind's applause
Goes, passing laws each one,
To Omnipotence, lord of laws."

Head praises, but heart refrains
From loving's acknowledgment.
Whole losses outweigh half-gains:
Earth's good is with evil blent:
Good struggles but evil reigns.

Yet since Earth's good proved good—
Incontrovertibly
Worth loving—I understood
How evil—did mind descry
Power's object to end pursued—

Were haply as cloud across
Good's orb, no orb itself:
Mere mind—were it found at loss
Did it play the tricksy elf
And from life's gold purge the dross?

Power is known infinite:
Good struggles to be—at best
Seems—scanned by the human sight,
Tried by the senses' test—
Good palpably: but with right

Therefore to mind's award
Of loving, as power claims praise?
Power—which finds nought too hard,
Fulfilling itself all ways
Unchecked, unchanged: while barred,

REVERIE

Baffled, what good began
  Ends evil on every side.
To Power submissive man
  Breathes "E'en as Thou art, abide!"
While to Good "Late-found, long-sought,

"Would Power to a plenitude
  But liberate, but enlarge
Good's strait confine,—renewed
  Were ever the heart's discharge
Of loving!" Else doubts intrude.

For you dominate, stars all!
  For a sense informs you—brute,
Bird, worm, fly, great and small,
  Each with your attribute
Or low or majestical!

Thou earth that embosomest
  Offspring of land and sea—
How thy hills first sank to rest,
  How thy vales bred herb and tree
Which dizen thy mother-breast—

Do I ask? "Be ignorant
  Ever!" the answer clangs:
Whereas if I plead world's want,
  Soul's sorrows and body's pangs,
Play the human applicant,—

Is a remedy far to seek?
  I question and find response:
I—all men, strong or weak,
  Conceive and declare at once
For each want its cure. "Power, speak!

"Stop change, avert decay,
Fix life fast, banish death,
Eclipse from the star bid stay,
Abridge of no moment's breath
One creature! Hence, Night, hail, Day!"

What need to confess again
No problem this to solve
By impotence? Power, once plain
Proved Power,—let on Power devolve
Good's right to co-equal reign!

Past mind's conception—Power!
Do I seek how star, earth, beast,
Bird, worm, fly, gained their dower
For life's use, most and least?
Back from the search I cower.

Do I seek what heals all harm,
Nay, hinders the harm at first,
Saves earth? Speak, Power, the charm!
Keep the life there unamerced
By chance, change, death's alarm!

As promptly as mind conceives,
Let Power in its turn declare
Some law which wrong retrieves,
Abolishes everywhere
What thwarts, what irks, what grieves!

Never to be! and yet
How easy it seems—to sense
Like man's—if somehow met
Power with its match—immense
Love, limitless, unbeset

REVERIE

By hindrance on every side !
  Conjectured, nowise known,
Such may be : could man confide
  Such would match—were Love but shown
Stript of the veils that hide—

Power's self now manifest !
  So reads my record : thine,
O world, how runs it ? Guessed
  Were the purport of that prime line,
Prophetic of all the rest !

"In a beginning God
  Made heaven and earth." Forth flashed
Knowledge : from star to clod
  Man knew things : doubt abashed
Closed its long period.

Knowledge obtained Power praise.
  Had Good been manifest,
Broke out in cloudless blaze,
  Unchequered as unrepressed,
In all things Good at best—

Then praise—all praise, no blame
  Had hailed the perfection. No !
As Power's display, the same
  Be Good's—praise forth shall flow
Unisonous in acclaim !

Even as the world its life,
  So have I lived my own—
Power seen with Love at strife,
  That sure, this dimly shown,
—Good rare and evil rife.

Whereof the effect be—faith
  That, some far day, were found
Ripeness in things now rathe,
  Wrong righted, each chain unbound,
Renewal born out of scathe.

Why faith—but to lift the load,
  To leaven the lump, where lies
Mind prostrate through knowledge owed
  To the loveless Power it tries
To withstand, how vain! In flowed

Ever resistless fact:
  No more than the passive clay
Disputes the potter's act,
  Could the whelmed mind disobey
Knowledge the cataract.

But, perfect in every part,
  Has the potter's moulded shape,
Leap of man's quickened heart,
  Throe of his thought's escape,
Stings of his soul which dart

Through the barrier of flesh, till keen
  She climbs from the calm and clear,
Through turbidity all between,
  From the known to the unknown here,
Heaven's "Shall be," from Earth's "Has
    been"?

Then life is—to wake not sleep,
  Rise and not rest, but press
From earth's level where blindly creep
  Things perfected, more or less,
To the heaven's height, far and steep,

REVERIE

Where, amid what strifes and storms
  May wait the adventurous quest,
Power is Love—transports, transforms
  Who aspired from worst to best,
Sought the soul's world, spurned the worms'.

I have faith such end shall be :
  From the first, Power was—I knew.
Life has made clear to me
  That, strive but for closer view,
Love were as plain to see.

When see ? When there dawns a day,
  If not on the homely earth,
Then yonder, worlds away,
  Where the strange and new have birth,
And Power comes full in play.

EPILOGUE

At the midnight in the silence of the sleep-time,
When you set your fancies free,
Will they pass to where—by death, fools think, imprisoned—
Low he lies who once so loved you, whom you loved so,
—Pity me?

Oh to love so, be so loved, yet so mistaken!
What had I on earth to do
With the slothful, with the mawkish, the unmanly?
Like the aimless, helpless, hopeless, did I drivel
—Being—who?

One who never turned his back but marched breast forward,
Never doubted clouds would break,
Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would triumph,
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
Sleep to wake.

No, at noonday in the bustle of man's work-time
Greet the unseen with a cheer!
Bid him forward, breast and back as either should be,
"Strive and thrive!" cry "Speed,—fight on, far ever
There as here!"

A CHRONOLOGICAL LIST

OF

ROBERT BROWNING'S POEMS AND PLAYS

1833. PAULINE: A Fragment of a Confession.

1835. PARACELSUS. Including the Songs—

I hear a voice, perchance I heard.
Heap cassia, sandal-buds, and stripes.
Over the sea our galleys went.
Thus the Mayne glideth.

1837. STRAFFORD: An Historical Tragedy.

1840. SORDELLO.

1841. Bells and Pomegranates, No. I., PIPPA PASSES. Including the Songs—

All service ranks the same with God.
The year 's at the Spring.
I am a painter who cannot paint.
Give her but a least excuse to love me!
A king lived long ago.[1]
You'll love me yet!—and I can tarry.
Overhead the tree-tops meet.

1842. Bells and Pomegranates No. II., KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES.

1842. Bells and Pomegranates, No. III., DRAMATIC LYRICS.

Cavalier Tunes—

I. Marching Along.
II. Give a Rouse.
III. My Wife Gertrude.[2]

Italy and France—

I. Italy.[3]
II. France.[4]

[1] An earlier version appeared in *The Monthly Repository*, 1835.
[2] Afterwards called "Boot and Saddle."
[3] Afterwards called "My Last Duchess."
[4] Afterwards called "Count Gismond."

1842. Bells and Pomegranates, No. III. (*continued*)—
Camp and Cloister—
I. Camp (French).[1]
II. Cloister (Spanish).[2]
In a Gondola.
Artemis Prologuizes.[3]
Waring.
Queen Worship—
I. Rudel and the Lady of Tripoli.
II. Cristina.
Madhouse Cells—
I. [Johannes Agricola.[4]]
II. [Porphyria.[5]]
Through the Metidja to Abd-el-Kadr, 1842.
The Pied Piper of Hamelin.

1843. Bells and Pomegranates, No. IV., THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES: A Tragedy in Five Acts.[6]

1843. Bells and Pomegranates, No. V., A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON: A Tragedy in Three Acts. Including the Song—
There 's a woman like a dew-drop.

1844. Bells and Pomegranates, No. VI., COLOMBE'S BIRTH-DAY: A Play in Five Acts.

1845. Bells and Pomegranates, No. VII., DRAMATIC ROMANCES AND LYRICS—
How they brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix.
Pictor Ignotus. Florence, 15—.
Italy in England.[7]
England in Italy.[8]
The Lost Leader.
The Lost Mistress.

[1] Afterwards called "Incident of the French Camp."
[2] Afterwards called "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister."
[3] Afterwards transferred to "Men and Women" with the spelling "Prologizes."
[4] Afterwards called "Johannes Agricola in Meditation"; was first printed in *The Monthly Repository*, vol. x. N.S. 1836, pp. 45, 46.
[5] Afterwards called "Porphyria's Lover"; was first printed in *The Monthly Repository*, vol. x. N.S. 1836, pp. 43, 44.
[6] Originally advertised under the title "Mansoor the Hierophant."
[7] Afterwards called "The Italian in England."
[8] Afterwards called "The Englishman in Italy."

1845. Bells and Pomegranates, No. VII. (*continued*)—
Home Thoughts from Abroad.
I. "Oh to be in England."
II. "Here 's to Nelson's Memory." [1]
III. "Nobly Cape St. Vincent." [2].
The Tomb at St. Praxed's.[3]
Garden Fancies—
I. The Flower's Name.[4]
II. Sibrandus Schafnaburgensis.[5]
France and Spain—
I. The Laboratory (Ancien Régime).[6]
II. The Confessional.
The Flight of the Duchess.[7]
Earth's Immortalities.
Song, "Nay but you, who do not love her."
The Boy and the Angel.[8]
Night and Morning (I. Night,[9] II. Morning [10]).
Claret and Tokay.[11]
Saul.[12]
Time's Revenges.
The Glove.

1846. Bells and Pomegranates, No. VIII. and last. LURIA and A SOUL'S TRAGEDY.

1850. CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY.

1855. MEN AND WOMEN. In Two Volumes—
Vol. I. Love among the Ruins.
A Lovers' Quarrel.
Evelyn Hope.
Up at a Villa—Down in the City. (As distinguished by an Italian Person of Quality.)

[1] First printed in *Hood's Magazine*, vol. i, June 1844, p. 525; afterwards as the third section of "Nationality in Drinks."

[2] Afterwards called "Home Thoughts from the Sea."

[3] Afterwards called "The Bishop Orders his Tomb at St. Praxed's Church," was first printed in *Hood's Magazine*, vol. iii. March 1845, pp. 237–239.

[4, 5] First printed in *Hood's Magazine*, vol. ii. July 1844, pp. 45–48.

[6] First printed in *Hood's Magazine*, vol. i. June 1844, pp. 513, 514.

[7] Sections 1 to 9, first printed in *Hood's Magazine*, vol. iii. April 1845, pp. 313 318.

[8] First printed in *Hood's Magazine*, vol. ii. August 1844, pp. 140–142.

[9] Afterwards called "Meeting at Night."

[10] Afterwards called "Parting at Morning."

[11] First printed in *Hood's Magazine*, vol. i, June 1844, p. 525; afterwards as the first and second sections of "Nationality in Drinks."

[12] First part only (sections 1–9); the second part was added and included with it in *Men and Women*, 1855, vol. ii. p. 111.

1855. MEN AND WOMEN. Vol. I. (*continued*)—
A Woman's Last Word.
Fra Lippo Lippi.
A Toccata of Galuppi's.
By the Fireside.
Any Wife to Any Husband.
An Epistle containing the Strange Medical Experience of Karshish, the Arab Physician.
Mesmerism.
A Serenade at the Villa.
My Star.
Instans Tyrannus.
A Pretty Woman.
"Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came."
Respectability.
A Light Woman.
The Statue and the Bust.[1]
Love in a Life.
Life in a Love.
How it strikes a Contemporary.
The Last Ride Together.
The Patriot: An Old Story.
Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha.
Bishop Blougram's Apology.
Memorabilia.

Vol. II. Andrea del Sarto (called "The Faultless Painter").
Before.
After.
In Three Days.
In a Year.
Old Pictures in Florence.
In a Balcony.
Saul. (See *note* 12, p. 371.)
"De Gustibus ——"
Women and Roses.
Protus.
Holy-Cross Day.
The Guardian Angel: A Picture at Fano.
Cleon.[2]
The Twins.[3]

[1] Also printed in pamphlet form in 1855.
[2] Also printed in pamphlet form in 1855.
[3] First printed in a pamphlet entitled "Two Poems. By Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Browning." 8vo. London, 1854.

1855. MEN AND WOMEN. Vol. II. (*continued*)—
Popularity.
The Heretic's Tragedy: A Middle-Age Interlude.
Two in the Campagna.
A Grammarian's Funeral.
One Way of Love.
Another Way of Love.
"Transcendentalism": A Poem in Twelve Books.
Misconceptions.
One Word More. To E. B. B.

1864. DRAMATIS PERSONÆ—
James Lee.[1]
Gold Hair: A Legend of Pornic.[2]
The Worst of It.
Dîs aliter visum; or Le Byron de nos Jours.
Too Late.
Abt Vogler.
Rabbi Ben Ezra.
A Death in the Desert.
Caliban upon Setebos; or, Natural Theology in the Island.
Confessions.
May and Death.[3]
Prospice.[4]
Youth and Art.
A Face.
A Likeness.
Mr. Sludge, "The Medium."
Apparent Failure.
Epilogue.

1864. Orpheus and Eurydice. F. Leighton.[5]

1868. Deaf and Dumb.[6]

1868–9. THE RING AND THE BOOK. In Four Volumes.

1871. BALAUSTION'S ADVENTURE, including a Transcript from Euripides.

[1] Afterwards entitled "James Lee's Wife."

[2] First printed in *The Atlantic Monthly*, vol. xiii. May 1864, p. 596, and in pamphlet form at the same date (Clowes).

[3] First printed in *The Keepsake* for 1857.

[4] First printed in *The Atlantic Monthly*, vol. xiii. June 1864, p. 694.

[5] First printed in the Catalogue of the Royal Academy Exhibition 1864, afterwards called "Eurydice to Orpheus."

[6] First printed in *The Poetical Works of Robert Browning*, six vols. 1868; vol. vi. p. 151.

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1871. PRINCE HOHENSTIEL-SCHWANGAU, SAVIOUR OF SOCIETY.

1872. FIFINE AT THE FAIR.

1873. RED COTTON NIGHT-CAP COUNTRY, OR TURF AND TOWERS.

1875. ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY, including a Transcript from Euripides, being the Last Adventure of Balaustion.

1875. THE INN ALBUM.

1876. PACCHIAROTTO AND HOW HE WORKED IN DISTEMPER: with other Poems—

Prologue.
Of Pacchiarotto and how he worked in Distemper.
At the "Mermaid."
House.
Shop.
Pisgah Sights. I.
" " II.
Fears and Scruples.
Natural Magic.
Magical Nature.
Bifurcation.
Numpholeptos.
Appearances.
St. Martin's Summer.
Hervé Riel.[1]
A Forgiveness.
Cenciaja.
Filippo Baldinucci on the Privilege of Burial.
Epilogue.

1877. THE AGAMEMNON OF ÆSCHYLUS.

1878. LA SAISIAZ.[2]

1878. THE TWO POETS OF CROISIC.[2]

1879. DRAMATIC IDYLS—

Martin Relph.
Pheidippides.
Halbert and Hob.
Ivàn Ivànovitch.
Tray.
Ned Bratts.

[1] First printed in *The Cornhill Magazine*, March 1871.
[2] Published together in one volume.

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1880. DRAMATIC IDYLS: SECOND SERIES—
[Prologue.]
Echetlos.
Clive.
Muléykeh.
Pietro of Abano.
Doctor ——.
Pan and Luna.
[Epilogue.]

1883. JOCOSERIA—
Wanting is—What?
Donald.
Solomon and Balkis.
Cristina and Monaldeschi.
Mary Wollstonecraft and Fuseli—
Adam, Lilith, and Eve.
Ixion.
Jochanan Hakkadosh.
Never the Time and the Place.
Pambo.

1884. FERISHTAH'S FANCIES—
Prologue.
1. The Eagle.
2. Melon-Seller.
3. Shah Abbas.
4. The Family.
5. The Sun.
6. Mihrab Shah.
7. A Camel-Driver.
8. Two Camels.
9. Cherries.
10. Plot-Culture.
11. A Pillar at Sebzevah.[1]
12. A Bean-Stripe: also Apple-Eating.
Epilogue.

1887. PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE OF IMPORTANCE IN THEIR DAY. To wit: Bernard de Mandeville, Daniel Bartoli, Christopher Smart, George Bubb Dodington, Francis Furini, Gerard de Lairesse, and Charles Avison. Introduced by a Dialogue between Apollo and the Fates; concluded by another between John Fust and his Friends.

[1] Afterwards reprinted with the spelling "Sebzevar."

1889. ASOLANDO: FANCIES AND FACTS—[1]
Prologue.
Rosny.
Dubiety.
Now.
Humility.
Poetics.
Summum Bonum.
A Pearl, A Girl.
Speculative.
White Witchcraft.
Bad Dreams. I.
,, ,, II.
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Inapprehensiveness.
Which ?
The Cardinal and the Dog.
The Pope and the Net.
The Bean-Feast.
Muckle-Mouth Meg.
Arcades Ambo.
The Lady and the Painter.
Ponte dell' Angelo, Venice.
Beatrice Signorini.
Flute-Music, with an Accompaniment.
" Imperante Augusto natus est——"
Development.
Rephan.
Reverie.
Epilogue.

1912. CENTENARY EDITION (in 10 Volumes). Vol. III.—Luria—A Soul's Tragedy—Dramatic Lyrics—Dramatic Romances.

Under the title "Additional Poems" the following appear for the first time in a collected edition:—
Sonnet—Eyes Calm beside Thee.[2]
A Forest Thought.[3]
Ben Karshook's Wisdom.[4]

[1] Published on December 12, 1889, the day of Mr. Browning's death.

[2] First printed in *The Monthly Repository*, October 1834; reprinted in the Browning Society's Papers, Part XII., Nicoll and Wise's *Literary Anecdotes*, p. 469, and in Hall Griffin and Minchin's *Life of Browning*, 1910, p. 306.

[3] First printed in *Country Life*, June 10, 1905; reprinted in *Robert Browning and Alfred Domett*, 1906, and in Hall Griffin and Minchin's *Life*, 1910, p. 305.

[4] First printed in *The Keepsake*, 1856, and frequently reprinted.

1912. CENTENARY EDITION (in 10 Volumes). Vol. IX.—Pacchiarotto and how he worked in Distemper. With other Poems—La Saisiaz—The Two Poets of Croisic—Dramatic Idyls.

Under the title "Additional Poems," the following appear for the first time in a collected edition:—

"Oh, Love, Love!" [1]
Verses from "The Hour will come." [2]
Goldoni.[3]
Helen's Tower.[4]
The Founder of the Feast (to Arthur Chappell).[5]
The Names (to Shakespeare).[6]
Why I am a Liberal.[7]

These seven poems have been reprinted in the Browning Society's Papers and in Nicoll and Wise's "Literary Anecdotes of the Nineteenth Century" Vol. I. (1895).

[1] First printed in J. P. Mahaffy's *Euripides*, 1879.

[2] From the German of Wilhelmine von Hillern; first printed in Miss Clara Bell's English Edition, 1879.

[3] First printed in *The Pall Mall Gazette*, December 8, 1883.

[4] First printed in *The Pall Mall Gazette*, December 28, 1883.

[5] First printed in *The World*, April 16, 1884.

[6] First appeared in the Shaksperean Show Book (Albert Hall), May 1884; reprinted in *The Pall Mall Gazette*, May 29, 1884.

[7] First printed in Andrew Reid's *Why I am a Liberal* (Cassell), 1885.

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THE END

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